



THE INDEPENDENT

Nº 3,402 MONDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 1997 WEATHER: Damp and windy in the north; fine in the south (IR 45p) 40p

IN THE TABLOID

THE OASIS TOUR: FIRST NIGHT VERDICT



COMMENT

THE BURNING QUESTION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

MEDIA 1

ABSOLUTELY FABULOUS, BUT DIFFERENT



Creative muses: A set of statues of the daughters of Jupiter and Mnemosyne, representing inspiration in the arts, which are to be displayed on the parapet of St Michael's Church, Shoreditch, east London, by the London Architectural Salvage and Supply Co. The statues, by the sculptor Bernard Sindall, were removed from their original home, the nearby Barbican Centre, in April. Photograph: John Lawrence



Tomorrow morning, *The Independent* is changing. You will find everything you have come to expect from us – the same cast of top writers, the excellent pictures, the intelligence, the unbiased attitudes. But you will also find as a fresher, sharper-looking paper, which is easier to use and – I hope – more enjoyable to read.

We are changing because, after more than a decade of accumulated experience, we think it is time to break the mould of custom and habit to produce a better paper – not just than the one you are reading, but than anything else on the newsagents' shelves. Throughout this year, not only over the past few weeks, we have been asking ourselves some hard questions about many of the assumptions of broadsheet journalism. Has everyone's agenda become a little lazy, a little narrow? Are there lessons to be learned from overseas? Is the writing as focused and thought-through as it should be? Are the designs of papers actually helpful, or just the result of copy-cat reflexes during a time of intense competition?

As a result, we have come up with a new kind of broadsheet. It hasn't simply been redesigned, though it will look different. It is edited and written in a different way, which will be tougher for the journalists and better for the readers.

No one will pick up tomorrow's paper and think we've dumbed down – far from it. But intelligent should mean bright and shining, not grey and cramped. Tomorrow's *Independent* will shock some conservative-minded souls, I have no doubt. But we've always been the paper for people of a less conventional cast of mind. So I believe that most of you will get the idea immediately, and grin when you see it.

Andrew Marr

A black Monday for Tories

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Criticism of the substance and style of William Hague's leadership of the Conservative Party is building up a head of steam in advance of next month's party conference in Blackpool.

Hugh Dykes, a former Conservative MP, yesterday announced that he was switching to the Liberal Democrats because of the Tories' steady drift away from One Nation policies.

But criticism of the leadership had gone way beyond the moderate wing of the party, who will continue to splinter off to the Liberal Democrats and Labour.

Former ministers and backbench critics are also sniping at Mr Hague's style and tactics – a campaign that will be bolstered by an embarrassing royal rebuke, delivered yesterday.

After the Conservative leader used an interview on BBC television's *Breakfast with Frost* to condemn the "shabby" way in which Tony Blair exploited the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, a senior royal source went out of his way to pay tribute to the No 10's "very positive" contribution.

Mr Hague accused No 10 of leaking confidential advice, to put the Government in a good light and the Royal Family in a bad light. "Now that's shabby politics," he said. A Government source said that Mr Hague was telling a "pack of lies", and although the royal source wanted to avoid becoming embroiled in a political row, he sided with Downing Street's version of events.

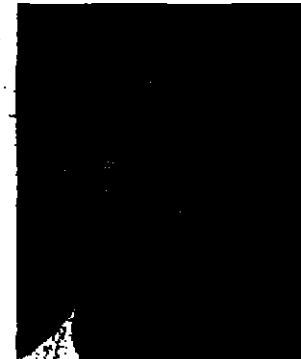
One astute political operator, with a proven track record, said last night: "[Mr] Hague's problem is that he has no strategy." There is also growing criticism, among MPs and constituency associations, of the way in which Mr Hague is "consulting" the party about proposed modernisation, which he is linking with a call to endorse his leadership.

One prominent Conservative MP said it was absurd to ask the party to vote on the leadership, when there was only one candidate being offered. "I thought the Soviet Union was dead and buried," he said.

There is a lingering, but pervasive, view among MPs that Mr Hague is very much on probation, as a "stop-gap" leader. It is felt that once Chris Patten and

Michael Portillo get back into the Commons, the party will want to reopen the leadership question with a proper, heavyweight contest, and rules that open it up to a vote by rank-and-file party members. A significant number of MPs are determined that should happen before the next election.

Replying to his critics, Mr Hague told *Breakfast with Frost*: "We had a heavy defeat and we've got to recognise that. We've got to change some things in our party, so I'm setting about changing the organisation to make sure the Tory party is a more united force, more cohesive force, is more democratic, involves more people, and that people feel involved in it, so that we have a disciplinary committee to protect the integrity of the party."



Hugh Dykes: Former Tory MP has defected to LibDems

undertaken a meet-the-people, travelling 5,000 miles across Britain, with the aim of meeting about 10,000 people. Today, he visits a London railway station tomorrow, he is in the Midlands. On Wednesday, he visits Wales on the eve of its devolution referendum, and on Thursday he goes to the North-east.

But the new leader's effort will be wasted on Mr Dykes, a member of the party for 37 years and Conservative MP for Harrow East for 27 years. He lost the seat to Labour in May, and although he applied unsuccessfully for selection as the Tory candidate in July's Uxbridge by-election, he describes his switch as "the sad conclusion of a long period of soul-searching".

In an article for today's *Independent*, Mr Dykes says: "I

have always been a One Nation Conservative, believing in social justice, committed to the European ideal, and a supporter of the sensible modernisation of our political system."

He then echoes the judgement of Enoch Powell, in 1974, saying: "On all these issues, I have not so much left the Conservative Party – the Conservative Party has left me." Mr Dykes also suggests that some Conservative MPs, and some who lost their seats, "sick at heart as I am, are still agonising."

Paddy Ashdown told *The Independent*: "Once firmly in the Conservative mainstream, people like Hugh Dykes feel increasingly uncomfortable in a party which has shifted so decisively to the right."

Hague attack backfires, page 6
Hugh Dykes, page 15

Taxpayers face fines for delay

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Millions of taxpayers face a deluge of fines from the Inland Revenue, netting hundreds of millions of pounds for the Government, because of continuing confusion over the new self-assessment tax return form.

With just 15 days to go before the first 30 September deadline, the Revenue confirmed yesterday that almost 5 million taxpayers out of the 8 million involved had not yet submitted their returns. Taxpayers have until the end of this month to submit forms if they want the Revenue to calculate any tax owing on their behalf.

If people do not send in payments by the final 31 January deadline they will receive an automatic penalty of £100, followed by another automatic £100 fine if they are still outstanding a month later. Though taxpayers can ask the Revenue to carry out the tax assessment after this month, the department cannot guarantee that it will respond in time.

Peter Black, a tax expert and former Revenue official,

warned: "By the end of the month there will be absolutely no help available for those who find the new forms daunting or difficult to understand."

Self-assessment, first announced by the previous government in 1993, is the biggest change to the British tax system since the introduction of the pay-as-you-earn system after the Second World War. The Inland Revenue is spending more than £5m on a public information campaign, most of which will be used to explain the deadlines and penalties.

The Revenue yesterday insisted the introduction of self-assessment was going to plan, in line with its estimate that 4.8 million taxpayers would submit returns by the end of this month. The rest were expected to calculate their own tax burden by 31 January.

"Most tax advisers are almost certain to do the calculations for their clients, but at this stage anyone talking about penalties is guessing," said a spokeswoman.

She defended the clarity of the forms and the accompanying



Reminder from the Revenue

Royal Academy shows art for adults only

David Lister
Arts News Editor

The Royal Academy is to take the unprecedented step of making one of its galleries an "adults only" space for its exhibition of avant-garde young British artists, *Sensation*, which opens this week.

The room, to which under-18s will not be admitted, will feature the brothers Jake and Dinos Chapman's work *Zygote Acceleration*, which displays androgynous children with aroused genitalia instead of faces.

But other controversial works, including a portrait by Chris Ofili of the Virgin Mary surrounded by explicit photographs from hard-core porn magazines, a canvas by Matt Colishaw showing a bullet hole in a human brain in extreme close-up to resemble female genitalia, and a painting by Marcus Harvey of the Moors murderer Myra Hindley, will be on general view.

People buying tickets for the exhibition will also be warned that some of the artworks could be thought "distasteful" and that "parents should exercise their judgement in bringing children to the exhibition".

The health warning, unique in the Royal Academy's 230-year history, comes amid growing protest about the *Sensation* exhibition. Much of the protest

has centred on the painting of Hindley. But it remains that the controversial Hindley painting could yet be withdrawn from the exhibition before it has its press view tomorrow, creating yet more problems for the troubled institution.

Such a move would mean further friction between academicians and the management of the RA. Last week the academy voted narrowly for the painting to be kept in the exhibition.

It is understood that Royal Academy officials are to contact Winnie Johnson, mother of one of the Moors victims, and may bow to her wishes to have the painting withdrawn. That could leave academicians who voted in favour of the painting being exhibited feeling that their wishes were irrelevant.

One senior academician, the sculptor Michael Sandle, 61, has already resigned over the Hindley painting and the way the Academy is being run. He said some of the *Sensation* exhibits were "appalling" and showing them "grossly offensive". The Royal Academy was, he said, "totally out of control."

But visitors to the exhibition – a selection of Young British Artists on loan from the collection of the advertising mogul Charles Saatchi – will find that there are exhibits just as shocking as Marcus Harvey's painting of Hindley, some notably more so.

The Holy Virgin Mary by Chris Ofili, 29, is juxtaposed with photographs of female genitalia. Even the critic Waldemar Januszczak, a passionate advocate of much contemporary art including the Turner Prize, which he brought to television when he was at Channel 4, said: "When you get close and see the pornographic photographs, it is clear it has no purpose other than to shock."

At their private meeting last week academicians rounded on David Gordon, secretary of the RA, and Norman Rosenthal, the exhibition secretary. Some said the exhibition was offensive and unworthy of being at the Royal Academy. Others pointed out that Mr Saatchi is a dealer and it is therefore inappropriate to show his collection at the Royal Academy. In addition it is rather unfair on talented young artists who do not happen to be in the Saatchi Collection.

Damien Hirst, whose animals in formaldehyde will be in the *Sensation* exhibition, said last week he had been asked to become a member of the Royal Academy but had refused. The Royal Academy denied the claim. In the present issue of *Time Out* magazine, three other artists in the *Sensation* exhibition, Fiona Rae, Gary Hume and Richard Patterson, say that if they ever were asked to join they would also refuse.

Who are we?

We are a new British company created by the merger of Mercury with three leading cable companies – Bell Cablemedia, NYNEX CableComms and Videotron.

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news

significant shorts

Two-thirds of paedophiles fail to report to police

As many as two-thirds of the sex offenders required to sign up to the so-called paedophile register have failed to report to police, it was disclosed yesterday. Probation workers have identified 2,200 former convicts who should be on the list, but by the registration deadline of midnight last night, only about 700-800 are expected to have come forward.

It is thought most avoiders are simply laying low and hoping the fuss will pass over, but a few paedophiles are thought to have "gone underground" by changing their addresses and identities. Brian Mackenzie, president of the Police Superintendents' Association, called yesterday for the identities of the most dangerous paedophiles who have not registered to be published on the Internet, despite warnings that this might lead to vigilante attacks.

The National Association of Probation Officers is required to tell all offenders on probation, parole or community service for serious sex crimes against women or children that they must report to police.

Dewar joins Welsh 'Yes' campaign

Donald Dewar, the Secretary of State for Scotland, yesterday joined the Welsh Assembly campaign but denied Labour was trying to bounce the Welsh into a "copycat vote". Fresh from his triumph in steering through the referendum for a Scottish Parliament, Mr Dewar insisted that devolution was for the benefit of everyone in Britain.

"I believe people in Wales will vote Yes on Thursday, and in large numbers. I am not here to ask Wales for a copycat vote. It is a decision for Wales. But what happened in Scotland symbolises public support behind modernising the British constitution. It is important for everyone in the UK in a wider context," he said.

Earlier, Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown cautioned against appearing to tell Welsh people to simply follow Scotland's example. "Welsh people aren't going to be told what to do by the Scottish people. Let's not say that because Scotland has done this, Wales must do it too," he said on GMTV.

Inquiry into care-home deaths



An independent inquiry begins today into how a county council handled cases of abuse against the residents of two care homes.

Former staff of the two Longcare homes in Stoke Poges, Bucks, are being asked to come forward to help with the investigation.

Nursing home director Angela Rowe, 39, (left) was jailed for two and a half years in June for her part in a catalogue of abuses against residents during a 10-year "reign of terror". Senior care assistant Lorraine Field, 42, was also jailed for 15 months for ill-treating residents with learning difficulties at the two homes which were run like "army camps."

Wife of top cricket umpire killed

The wife of a top cricket umpire was killed and their son was seriously injured when their car collided with a bus yesterday. Barrie Leadbeater was due to officiate at a match between Middlesex and Nottinghamshire at Lord's when he was told that his wife Jacqueline and son Michael had been hurt in an accident in Scholes, near Leeds.

He immediately travelled to St James' Hospital in Leeds, where the news was broken that Mrs Leadbeater had been certified dead on arrival. Michael, one of the couple's three sons, is seriously ill but stable in the hospital.

Mrs Leadbeater, who was in her late 40s, was driving a Ford Orion and her son was a passenger. The car collided with the bus, which was empty, on Leeds Road yesterday morning. The bus then hit a wall and ended up in the garden of a house.

EU gets tough on cereal killers

Tougher rules on tiny toys given away free with chocolate eggs, crisps and cereals are set to be introduced by Brussels, to cut the risk of children choking on them.

The move was welcomed yesterday by Nigel Griffiths, the Consumer Affairs Minister, who said he wanted clarification of current safety precautions taken by food manufacturers.

Britain had been among the leaders in Europe in clamping down on the dangers of the free gifts after three recorded deaths and a series of hospital admissions, he said.

"But we very much welcome the action that is being taken by Brussels. There are no grounds for complacency. As the rules get tougher, we want to keep in the lead. We are taking no sort of relaxed view of this - we want to make sure that no child is at risk."

Brewery to challenge beer-duty rise

A family brewery is to mount a legal challenge against the Government's 1p-a-pint duty rise on beer, it emerged yesterday.

Lawyers for Shepherd Neame are seeking a judicial review of Chancellor Gordon Brown's budget decision which they say has left British brewers even worse off in the battle against cheap continental beer imports.

The drinks industry has long campaigned against the high rate of duty - six-times that in France - imposed on home-made products and blamed for the closure of hundreds of pubs. The High Court will hear that under the Treaty of Rome, governments are obliged to harmonise duty rates with Europe and promote the single market.

Blindness no obstacle to acting pair

Two aspiring actors are this week preparing to start at one of Britain's most prestigious drama colleges even though one is blind and the other can barely see.

Ryan Kelly and Jaimie Purvis fought off competition from 3,000 sighted actors to win two of 30 places in this year's intake at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School.

The pair - believed to be the first drama students with such serious sight problems - hope they are blazing a trail that will encourage more blind people to take to the stage. Jaimie, 20, from Port Talbot in West Glamorgan, is hoping to follow in the footsteps of his hero, Oscar-winning fellow-Welshman Sir Anthony Hopkins.

County mail on silent running

A state of the art electric car takes to the streets of Devon today as part of the county council's commitment to exploring the use of alternative fuels.

The electrically-powered Peugeot 106, which will deliver goods and internal mail in and around Exeter for a three week trial period, was "a glimpse of the future," said county environment director Edward Chorlton.

The car, which has a range of 50 miles and has a top speed of 50 mph, takes six hours to fully charge from an ordinary mains socket.

people



In memoriam: Elton John singing 'Candle in the Wind' at the funeral of his friend, Diana

Elton's tribute to a princess storms to Number One

Elton John's tribute single to Diana, Princess of Wales, shot to the top of the charts after just one day on sale, it was revealed yesterday.

"Candle in the Wind 1997" went platinum after selling more than 600,000 copies in just a few hours yesterday, as shoppers frantically snapped up every CD and cassette they could find.

The remarkable scenes have made it the fastest-selling single of all time and have won it the coveted number one slot with record-breaking speed, pipping the Princess's friend George Michael's new release "You Have Been Loved".

Up to 1,000 staff came in for a special Sunday shift at Mercury Records' main pressing plant in Blackburn and other centres around the country yesterday, in a massive effort to get another million copies into the stores. Additional supplies of the single - recorded last Saturday immediately after its first public performance at Diana's Westminster Abbey funeral - should be in the shops by the time doors open today.

Fleets of lorries were making deliveries around the country yesterday, and Mercury expects to have all 1.5 million advance orders in the shops by tomorrow.

Robert Partridge, a spokesman for Mercury, said: "It has been an incredible few days and we have gone into completely uncharted territory. Around 1,000 people have been working on it. It's been a remarkable effort, which is still going on."

Initially, Mercury estimated that it would only be able to provide shops with 250,000 copies of the single on

the release day, but calculations at the end of a hectic day showed that workers and distributors had vastly surpassed expectations.

The single - a rewritten version of Elton's Seventies tribute to Marilyn Monroe - looks set to become Britain's biggest hit, beating Band Aid's "Do They Know It's Christmas?", which sold 3.5 million.

It is expected to raise at least £10m for the Diana, Princess of Wales, Memorial Fund and some music industry insiders have predicted it will stay at the top of the charts until Christmas.

Record stores do not yet know how many singles they will receive today, and there could be a repeat of Saturday's scenes, when shoppers rushed to snatch up all available copies. Hundreds of people queued for hours to be able to buy the £3.99 disc on its release day, and rationing had to be introduced after some asked for as many as 100 copies at a time.

It seems almost certain that "Candle in the Wind 1997" has achieved Britain's record first-day sale for a single.

Band Aid's "Do They Know It's Christmas?" sold more than a million copies in its first 10 days in 1984, a figure which the Diana single looks set to smash. The eagerly-awaited Oasis hit "D'You Know What I Mean?" took three days to sell 250,000 in July.

Most number one singles sell about 75,000 in the week they top the charts, though declining sales have meant some discs have claimed the slot with as few as 30,000 copies changing hands.

Police quizz road-rage solicitor on fraud charge

Tim Robinson, the solicitor who represented "road-rage" killer Tracie Andrews was yesterday being quizzed by fraud investigators after spending a night in police cells.

Gloucester magistrates ruled at a special sitting yesterday that he could be detained for up to 36 hours for questioning over alleged misuse of public funds.

They granted a Serious Fraud Office application for the detention after a three-hour hearing.

Brian Head, solicitor for the defence, successfully applied for an order preventing publication of case details which could be prejudicial to his client. Mr Robinson is under arrest for the alleged aiding and abetting of false accounting in his firm and for conspiracy to defraud.

Gloucestershire police declined to give any details of his detention, but it was understood that Mr Robinson was likely to be released within 10 days of the 4am detention limit today.

He was first arrested by police last month over allegations of Legal Aid fraud. He voluntarily attended Stroud police station for interview.

At the special court hearing, Jean Austin of the Serious Fraud Office made the detention application which was contested by



Mr Head. The police investigation centres on a three-year period when Mr Robinson's criminal law firm ran offices in Cheltenham, Gloucester, Swindon and Bristol.

In January 1995, the offices were raided in a co-ordinated police operation. They also visited Mr Robinson's home at Badgeworth, near Cheltenham, and the homes of staff members.

His client Tracie Andrews was jailed for life in July for the murder of her lover Lee Harvey. As she began her life sentence Mr Robinson said he would be appealing against her conviction.

Russia's Sinatra gets into politics his way

A singer who has been called Russia's Frank Sinatra was elected to parliament yesterday, a few days after he bid farewell to his many fans in a concert televised live nationwide.

Iosif Kobzon will represent a Siberian region in parliament's lower house, Russian news agencies reported, citing officials in the Aginsky Buryat district. He beat five other candidates, but official results were not available.

Kobzon ran for the State Duma in the last general elections, in December 1995, but was not elected. The seat later became available. Kobzon, who said he wanted to "leave the stage gracefully" when he turned 60, celebrated his birthday last week with a final Moscow concert.

For the past eight months he had been on a gruelling farewell tour billed as "I've Given All I've Got to Song," which took him across the former Soviet Union.

Kobzon, who started out as a young soldier singing patriotic Soviet hymns, became one of Russia's richest and most controversial figures. Much like Sinatra, the Russian crooner has been dogged by accusations of having ties to organised crime figures.

AP - Moscow

Do you want to hear a secret? asks Macca

Sir Paul McCartney has spoken out about some of the secrets of his days as a Beatle - including how he slept with a prostitute and introduced Mick Jagger to cannabis.

In his new biography, *Many Years From Now*, serialised in *The Observer's* "Life" magazine yesterday, the musician told how he was introduced to cannabis by Bob Dylan, and then two years later gave Jagger his first joint at his London home.

"Funny, because everyone would have thought it would have been the other way around," said McCartney.

The book, due to be published next month, has been written by Barry Miles after hours of interviews with Sir Paul. Speaking of his nightlife in London in 1964, Sir Paul said: "The clubs were all more or less the same: birds and occasionally live music."

"The Bag o'Nails was my favourite. It was supposed to have been a hookers' hangout before, it probably was then too. But young, trendy hookers in miniskirts."

"Now I recall, I might have got asked for money one night after pulling some bird. I wouldn't pay, though, you know."

The book also gives insights into the successful Lennon and McCartney songwriting partnership, how they planned their days and worked together.

Sir Paul claimed he was introduced to pot by Dylan in a New York hotel room in the same year.

"We were kind of proud to have been introduced to pot by Dylan," he said, "that was rather a coup."

"It was like being introduced to meditation and given your mantra by Maharishi. There was a certain status to it."

briefing

FINANCE

Tax-payers to face fines of £500m for missed deadline

Millions of taxpayers who have not returned their self assessment forms face fines totalling £500m, an expert warned yesterday.

Up to two thirds of the 8 million earners on the new form of assessment have not yet filled in their forms as the deadline of 30 September approaches.

Peter Black, a former Inland Revenue deputy controller who has set up a self-assessment advisory company, Simplitax, said: "By the end of the month there will be absolutely no help available for those who find the new forms daunting and difficult to understand."

"This means that after 30 September revenue inspectors will not be able to tell you how much tax you will have to pay by 31 January next year." Penalties will start to come into force after 31 January, including £100 fines and surcharges. Mr Black also warned taxpayers not to panic and seek advice from disreputable firms. Tax advising is one of the few professions which is unregulated, Mr Black said, adding: "Taxpayers have no protection from 'cowboy' firms."

SHOPPING

Little profit in Sunday opening

Sunday shopping has become part of the nation's weekend - but as more shops open to meet the demand, they are failing to find extra profits, according to a report published today.

Three years after Sunday trading was introduced, more than half of Britons take advantage of the law change, an annual survey found. Shopping on the Sabbath has overtaken other more traditional pastimes on the "day of rest"; only one in eight Britons regularly sits down to a family Sunday lunch.

The number of stores open for trading on Sundays has increased by 6 per cent in the past year, says the survey report for international property consultants Hestley and Baker. Of the top 100 cities and towns, 97 per cent have more than 10 per cent of their shops open. But the average increase of profits was just over 1 per cent for the shops that open, while 45 per cent of retailers trading on Sunday reported that they had seen no additional profit at all.

SOCIETY

Kids really, really want to be rich



Modern children are shameless materialists who value wealth above health and happiness, according to a survey out today.

Asked to name one wish, 40 per cent of the 7- to 14-year-olds polled by Fox Kids television network wanted to be rich, while only 4 per cent sought happiness and 4 per cent health.

The survey of more than 1,000 youngsters across the country found they hanker after the top designer labels, big houses, cars and televisions, and the Spice Girls are their top role models.

Making money was the main aim in life among 38 per cent of the teenage boys surveyed, and 16 per cent wanted to win the lottery. Half the boys said life would not be worth living without football and nearly as many - 47 per cent - found television essential to life.

They reeled off Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren and Armani as their favourite designer labels in clothes, and Adidas, Nike, Kickers and Reebok in footwear. Fox Kids managing director Rod Henwood said: "Kids today are increasingly adopting adult values and our challenge as a children's channel is to create a kids' world that entertains without corrupting them."

WILDLIFE

Warning over birds at risk on farms

Wildlife experts today go to Brussels with a blunt warning that only a shake-up in farming policy can halt the decline in the bird population.

The skylark and the lapwing were once common sights on fields in Britain and on the Continent. But pesticides and the practice of ploughing-under have killed flocks and destroyed nest sites, resulting in drastically falling populations. Officials from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) will meet Franz Fischler, the EU Commissioner, to warn him that falling numbers in bird populations on farmland signal the need for environmentally friendly objectives at the heart of Common Agricultural Policy reform. The RSPB says the EU's plans for improving the situation are too weak.

JUSTICE

Cash for acquitted prisoners?

Remand prisoners who are acquitted when their cases reach court should be allowed to apply for compensation, a report says today.

They would be eligible to claim for cash to cover lost earnings, employment and housing and for the stress suffered, the Prison Reform Trust said. It also said that the Government needed to act to stop the rise of remand prisoners, as the number of those held awaiting trial had more than doubled in the last 15 years.

The report, *Prisoners on Remand*, called for an end to the remaining in custody of 15- and 16-year-olds and for improved regimes for remand prisoners. The trust said there was an average of 11,613 remand prisoners held in 1996. Fewer than half the men and fewer than one-third of the women remanded in custody were subsequently jailed, according to the report.

SPORT

Setting new rules for football

Football must change if it is to keep the loyalty of fans who have supported it through good times and bad, according to a report out today.

A pamphlet from the Fabian Society, the left-wing think-tank, presents a "team" of 11 new ideas for the Government's new soccer task-force, which is headed by David Mellor, the former Tory heritage secretary. They range from special "football for £1" weekends and "fan forums", to the establishment of a new regulatory body to be called Offfoot.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

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هكذا من الأصل



Rock steady: Noel Redding (left) Kathy Etchingham and Pete Townshend at the ceremony yesterday to dedicate the blue plaque

Photograph: John Lawrence

Hendrix gets the blues (plaque, that is)

Pop stars from the past four decades gathered in London yesterday for the unveiling of a blue plaque to the legendary guitarist Jimi Hendrix.

The first award of its kind to a rock musician took place at 23 Brook Street, Mayfair, where Hendrix lived from 1968-9 with Kathy Etchingham, who proposed the plaque.

It was unveiled by close friends Pete Townshend, of The Who, and Noel Redding, of Hendrix's band, The Experience, with a star-studded audience including Roger Daltrey, Jimmy Page, Ray Davies, Dave Gilmour, Brian Eno, Lemmy, and representing the current generation, Primal Scream, Dugout and The Verve.

Hendrix spent his most successful years in Britain and it is where he initially came to fame. The Jimi Hendrix Experience had their first hit single with *Hey Joe* in December, 1966, following Hendrix's arrival from the United States in September of that year.

Hendrix died, aged 27, in 1970.

Violent videos haunt children's minds



Violent scenes from *Alien* profoundly affected children

Roger Dobson

Graphic scenes of screen violence stick in children's minds and have a far more profound effect on them than nudity, sex scenes or bad language, according to new research.

The eruption of an alien creature from a man's stomach in the film *Alien*, cockroaches coming out of a mouth in *Creature Comforts* and a head bitten off and rolling away in *An American Werewolf in London* were among the most frightening scenes children wanted to dismiss from their minds but

could not, a British Psychological Society conference was told yesterday.

Explicit violence was the source of most unwanted memories among children interviewed by researchers, and more than half described in detail a specific violent scene they had watched and could not dismiss from their thoughts.

Psychologist Glenn Cupit, senior lecturer at the University of South Australia, asked 1,500 children, mostly aged 10 and 11, to describe scenes from commercially available videos. He found that scenes of nu-

diety, genitalia, eroticism and bad language, frequently a target for censors, were seldom mentioned by the children. It was the films with scenes of violence, horror and dismemberment that dominated the list of unwelcome memories.

Mr Cupit, who presented his findings yesterday to the BPS development psychology conference in Loughborough, said: "We may be concentrating on the wrong things. Violent scenes, which have the greatest impact on children, are not always the ones that adults fear are harmful. Children most of-

ten report particularly persistent and unwelcome memories about violent scenes like people being cut up with chainsaws, being put through meat mincers and that sort of thing.

"Some scenes commonly thought to stimulate memory, such as nudity, sexual behaviour or insanity, do not affect as many children. These findings are important because they reveal what children themselves, rather than adults, identify as the types of violent video scenes which have a lasting effect."

He said one of the problems with tackling violence in videos

was that the moral high ground on censorship was held by the lobby for sexual censorship, which was more organised.

"There is the occasional outcry about violence after a particular event, but the pressure soon dies away. One of the problems is that legislators know that if they put restrictions on violence it will have a major impact on the (film and video) business," he said.

During the study, researchers found that a higher than expected proportion of young children had watched some of the most notoriously violent

films. *Evil Dead*, for example, considered one of the most violent available, was watched by three out of 10 children.

The common perception of bullies as unpopular oafs lacking intelligence and social skills may be wrong and dangerous, according to research reported at the conference yesterday.

Bullies are often popular and manipulative masters of the social situation, said psychologist Jon Sutton and Professor Peter Smith of Goldsmith's College, London University, who interviewed around 200 children aged seven to 10.

Viewers' fear factor

Almost two-thirds of adults said violence was their main concern about television, according to a Broadcasting Standards Commission report. Only 9 per cent said sex on television was their biggest concern. Lady Howe, the chairwoman, said: "The research tells us that 63 per cent of parents have had cause to switch off their televisions while viewing with children. In almost half of these cases it was because of the violence being portrayed."

Veggies who can't resist the pleasures of the flesh

Kathy Marks

The number of people renouncing meat has been increasing steadily for years, and accelerated in the wake of the BSE affair. But, according to a new survey, nearly half of adults who call themselves vegetarians secretly sneak off for burgers and bacon butties.

Research by Taylor Nelson AGB, a marketing company, concludes that while 7 per cent of British adults describe themselves as vegetarians, only 4 per cent have embraced an entirely meat-free diet. The research also reinforces previous surveys suggesting that a vegetarian diet is more attractive to women than to men. Five per cent of women said they abstained completely from meat and fish.

According to latest estimates, there are now three million vegetarians in Britain, which represents a 20 per cent increase over the past two years. Numbers are swelling by another 5,000 each week, with many new converts citing the beef scare as their main reason.

In addition, another 8 million people say they avoid red meat, while continuing to eat fish and poultry. Die-hard meat-eaters are to be found in strength north of the border; only 1.6 per cent of Scottish men have succumbed to vegetarianism.

While the vegetarian diet is more popular among women, the trend away from meat is reported to be rising more quickly among men. It is open to question, of course, whether these men give honest answers

to surveys. It may be that they regularly nip out for a clandestine hamburger, unsated by a healthy supper of spinach leaves and pine nuts.

Doubts about the veracity of reports of numbers of vegetarians are also reinforced by the meat industry's oft-repeated contention that consumption of all types of meat has remained steady for the past 30 years.

It may be that those who "cheat", while attracting the opprobrium of dietary purists, are actually doing themselves a favour.

According to a report by a London clinic earlier this year, men who eat steak are healthier than those who eschew red meat.

The private Wellman Clinic

said that men who ate little or no beef or lamb were prone to exhaustion and often had a pallid appearance. Steak lovers, on the other hand, had more iron in their blood and found it easier to stay fit.

But if the relative benefits to health of different diets remain disputable, the social advantages of vegetarianism appear more certain, particularly if the object of desire eats no meat.

About half of single vegetarians told researchers a few years ago that they would refuse even to consider going out with a meat-eater, no matter how desperate they were for company.

"You don't want to kiss someone with greasy pork fat on his mouth," sniffed one woman.

'I couldn't bear the cruelty'

The idea that some vegetarians "cheat" by eating meat is a nonsense: there is no hard and fast line to be dictated or taken.

Intellectually, it would be possible to take a principled stand by refusing to eat beef or pork, or by eating fish on Fridays.

I class myself as a vegetarian because I do not eat meat, and will go out of my way to avoid it, even at the risk of causing embarrassment to myself and others.

But I do not take such a strong line against eating fish, and will eat it, if it avoids embarrassment for a host or hostess. I prefer not to eat any flesh, but sometimes make an exception for fish (and politicians).

Yet I wear leather shoes and belts, consume dairy produce like milk and cheese, and eat so-called free-range eggs. If that is hypocritical, then it is the result of having a principle. Only those without principles cannot be hypocritical.

The degrees of vegetarianism can be as different as the causes. I know vegetarians who do not like meat because they do not like the taste, when it has

It's my choice, and there are no rules, writes Anthony Bevins

taste. Others will eat white meat, like chicken, but not red meat, or vice versa, for the same reason.

I turned against meat in my mid-forties because I could not bear the cruelties involved in meat production; I did not wish to be responsible for the evident pain inflicted by men on animals to satisfy my appetite.

It helped that my daughter is a vegetarian, and she advised on diet and protein; matters that had not previously bothered me. She also assured me - quite rightly - that not eating meat would cause me no harm.

It is a personal choice and, as such, it is tailored to each individual, by each individual. I suspect that meat, unlike tobacco, is not addictive, and I do not think it is as carcinogenic, but if vegetarians occasionally eat meat, that is their choice. Cheating has nothing to do with it.

'Is there any more salami?'

I am not a proper vegetarian, as carnivorous friends gleefully point out, when they think they have "caught" me out eating parma ham, bacon or sausages.

Why am I "allowed" to eat those? I look round to make sure the Vegetarian State Police are not watching. "Because I like them," I say. "Besides, I am sure it's all free-range pig."

In fact, the truth is that what I fail to be is a pescatarian, not a vegetarian, because I eat fish. But most people would think I was talking about star signs. I have always been a moral relativist.

I don't know if animals have rights, but if they do I am sure that less injustice is done by killing fish than cattle. There are hierarchies of both sentience and cruelty.

Some time after I gave up meat (most of the time) I was heartened to be told that fish don't feel pain.

Apparently they don't need to, because they don't have memories, so pain is of no use to them. They simply respond by reflex to external stimuli.

So I like bacon? Where's the beef? asks John Rentoul

This is a good enough justification for me, although how salmon find their way back to their breeding grounds remains a mystery.

Anyway, I didn't become a partial pescatarian because I was against killing animals. My main motive was my own health: I don't think a lot of meat is good for you and the way it is produced involves a lot of chemicals and antibiotics and mechanically recovered bits you can't be too sure about. And I worked in a chicken house once.

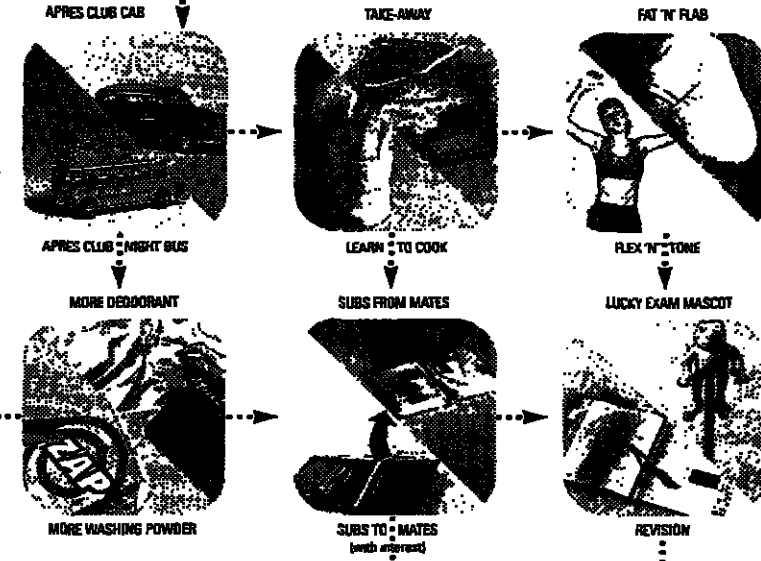
As a secondary consideration, I see no point in being cruel to animals if it can be avoided - and industrial farming and abattoirs can be - although, being a moral relativist, I am more concerned about cruelty to humans.

Is there any more of that salami?

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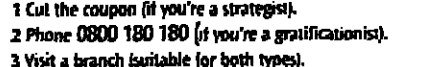
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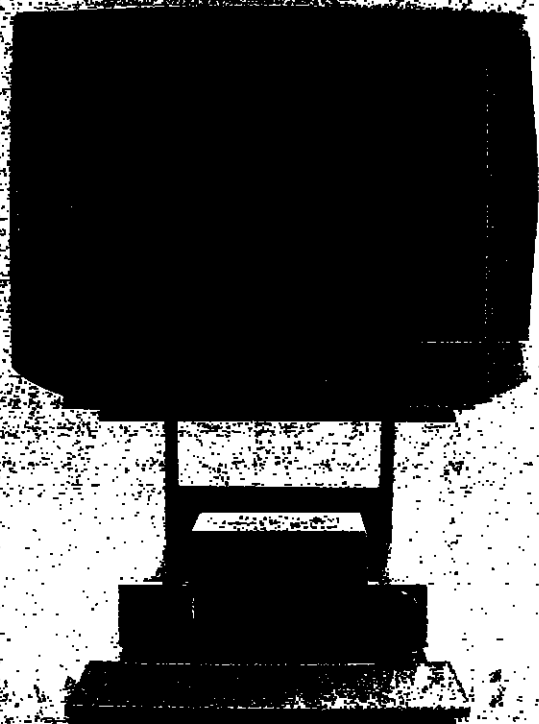
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news

Literacy drive brings extra lessons for primary teachers

Lucy Ward

Every primary school teacher will receive extra training in teaching reading and writing, under an ambitious Government programme to drive up literacy standards.

Schools, education authorities, and the Government, together with parents and

employers, will all have a role in a nation-wide effort to boost reading, according to the National Literacy Strategy, published today.

The detailed five-year agenda, which confirms the place of literacy at the heart of the Government's education programme, will lead to unprecedented consistency

among primary schools across the country.

Teachers will be trained to use officially recognised teaching techniques, and all primary schools will be required to set aside an hour each day for the teaching of reading, unless they can prove they are using alternative methods which are as good or more successful.

The strategy, devised by a Literacy Task Force appointed by Labour while in opposition, is designed to achieve the Government's ambitious targets of 80 per cent of all 11-year-olds reading at the standard expected for their age by 2002.

Last year, only 56 per cent achieved that level.

Work on the demanding programme will begin immediately, as local education authorities start devising action plans for raising literacy standards in primary schools.

Schools will become directly involved next summer, when each will send their head teacher, a governor, and a designated literacy co-ordinator for two days' training in teaching reading and writing, to be passed on to all staff.

From autumn 1998, when schools are expected to introduce a reading hour, those which have furthest to go to meet the literacy target will receive extra intensive support from specially appointed consultants.

To back up the programme,

the 1998-99 school year will be designated "National Year of Reading", when parents will be urged through media campaigns to help their children read.

Funding for the strategy, which will be monitored in schools and LEAs by Ofsted, will come from a fund given to local authorities for education training.

The schools minister Stephen Byers said the strategy provided a practical agenda for action. "Every primary school in the land has an important part to play in our national drive to raise standards. Every parent and employer will welcome our determination to ensure our children have the literacy skills they will need in the 21st century."

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Hague attack over funeral backfires

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

An attack by William Hague on the "shabby" way in which Tony Blair exploited the funeral of Princess Diana backfired last night, after a senior royal source praised Number 10's "very positive contribution".

Mr Hague told BBC television's *Breakfast with Frost* programme: "The thing that has annoyed me most of all, and it has to be said at some stage, is the leaking of advice given to the Royal Family, the apparent briefings to the press, that advice was given to the Royal Family that puts the Government in a good light and the Royal Family in a bad light."

"Now that's shabby politics and it's bad government and it's no way to support the Royal Family in the future."

"I can't believe that that has been done with the sanction or authority of the Prime Minister. Prime ministers give confidential advice to the Royal Family."

ly, but he should prevent it happening at any time."

A Government source said last night: "It is a pack of lies". And although the Palace was embarrassed at any suggestion of it becoming embroiled in political controversy, the Royal source said there had been no question of the Prime Minister hijacking the event.

Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's press secretary, held two No 10 briefings for members of the parliamentary Lobby in the week before the funeral.

With the prior knowledge and approval of the Palace, his initial message was that the Palace and the families had decided to break with tradition by excluding some of the great and the good from the funeral guest-list.

After the press had started to attack the Royal Family for being out of touch, the second briefing concentrated on the message that some of the "common touch" ideas for the funeral

— such as the invitation for representatives of the Princess's favourite charities to join the funeral procession from St James's — had been initiated by the Palace.

The media was also attacked for treating the grief-stricken Royal Family as little more than "extras" in a media-led event.

One source said yesterday that it had not been a matter of No 10 breaking confidentiality; the Palace had asked for help in getting the messages out, and No 10 had come to its assistance.

As for presenting No 10 in a good light, to the detriment of the Royal Family, No 10 went to extreme lengths to promote the role of the Palace — at times, frustrating reporters who were desperate for copy which was critical of the Royals.

Mr Hague said: "The Princess did not belong to one political party." If Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was chairing a special committee on proposals for a permanent memorial, then politicians from other parties should also be represented, he added.

Earlier, reports that both Prince Charles and Mr Blair were planning to abolish the Civil List, in return for the Queen keeping her \$84m annual income from the Crown Estates, which is at present handed to the Government, were categorically denied by both the Palace and Downing St.

However, the reports rekindled the debate about the future of the monarchy. The Prince of Wales has let it be known he wants to use the current climate to encourage major changes in the role of the Royal Family, according to sources close to the Palace. The Prince is also said to be determined that his sons, William and Harry, should have an upbringing more in tune with contemporary society.



Headline event: Residents of west Belfast digesting news that Unionists were edging closer to meeting Sinn Féin yesterday Photograph: David Rose

Ulster talks on brink of new dawn

Unionists set wheels in motion for direct negotiation with Sinn Féin. David McKittrick reports

Potentially historic political talks will be convened in Belfast this morning amid uncertainty on when the Ulster Unionist Party will enter the building for negotiations which will involve Sinn Féin.

Most participants and observers believe that David Trimble will lead his Ulster Unionists into the talks, but few think this will happen today.

Instead, the first item on the agenda is likely to be a complaint from the Rev Ian Paisley that Sinn Féin is not a democratic party and should therefore be expelled from the exercise. Most participants believe the talks will not be long delayed by the censure move, since it seems unlikely that he will appear in person to press the case in the presence of Sinn Féin.

However, both the British and Irish governments and others taking part are likely to express their disapproval of last week's statement by an IRA spokesman that the terrorist organisation "have some problems with" the Mitchell principles of espousing non-violence and democracy.

The talks are currently on item 2A of the agenda of the opening plenary session, the point at which they have been for many months.

To move from this point requires the assent of Mr Trimble. If, as most expect, he does not appear today, then the other participants are likely to busy

themselves with a range of bilateral and trilateral meetings. On Saturday, the executive of Mr Trimble's party authorised him to go into talks on whatever basis he judged fit. The general sense is that the party's entry is thus inevitable, though when and how this might happen is still uncertain.

Mr Trimble has spoken of varying the structure of the talks, presumably to ensure that for the moment at least he and his delegates do not sit down face-to-face with Sinn Féin.

More than 80 per cent of the speakers at Saturday's meeting of the executive were in favour

of entering talks. This mirrored findings of an opinion poll last week, which recorded 93 per cent of party supporters as being in favour of talks.

Northern Ireland political development minister Paul Murphy yesterday told Sky television: "My belief is that the talks will be opening a new era in Northern Ireland politics. I hope and pray that all parties in Northern Ireland will be involved in those talks."

"I particularly hope that the Ulster Unionist Party, which is the largest party in Northern Ireland, will be a major player in those talks because they represent a very important com-

munity. And all the evidence from the Ulster community last week, by way of opinion polls and other matters as well, do indicate that there is a feeling among people in Northern Ireland on both sides of the community that the only way ahead is by the parties talking to each other."

Mr Murphy added later: "I don't believe for one second that the Ulster Unionist Party will abdicate its responsibility, in the words of Ken Maginnis yesterday, to put their point of view across in any talks and process."

"At least the Ulster Unionist Party has said it will participate." He encouraged them to join face-to-face talks: "My own view is that it is by far the best thing for the parties to be together in the same room."

Bodyguard says driver was sober

The British bodyguard assigned to protect Diana, Princess of Wales, during her romance with Dodi Fayed, has insisted there was no clue on the night they died that their driver Henri Paul was drunk. Alexander Wingfield spent about two hours immediately before the fatal crash in Paris with Mr Paul, 41, whose post-mortem blood tests proved he was more than three times over the drink-driving limit. Mr Wingfield has told BBC's *Panorama*: "I never saw the guy drink anything. I mean he was French, he'd been off duty. The French drink wine at every meal, but there was nothing in his demeanour that would suggest to me that he was drunk."

"He was exactly the same as he was in the afternoon, just a nice guy and he was sober."

In a programme, entitled *Diana, The Last Day*, to be screened tonight, Mr Wingfield said of the accident: "If anyone is to blame it should be whoever was hounding the car that night because there had been an escalation throughout the whole period we were away."

He said that, ironically, Diana had been concerned for the safety of the photographers earlier in the day. She feared they might fall in front of the cars.

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Minister defends £17,000 pay rises for Cabinet

Anthony Bevins

The Government yesterday defended its decision to go ahead with plans to increase Cabinet salaries from April while curbing public sector pay for people such as nurses and teachers.

After the election, Cabinet ministers agreed to postpone their pay rise for a year — when they are due to get an increase of £17,209, or 19.6 per cent, taking them to £105,060.

A Government source said yesterday that any comparison between nurses and ministers was "invidious", and Stephen

Byers, Minister for Education, said extra money was being made available for education, to be spent on recruiting more teachers, books and equipment.

Referring to a comment made by teachers' leader Nigel de Gruchy, Mr Byers said: "It's disappointing that the first thing a general secretary of a teacher union does is threaten that they're going to go on strike, when in fact we've had the first tranche of new money coming into the education service for many a year."

He told GMTV's *Sunday Programme* that more than

£1bn extra was being pumped into education over the next two years. He said the Department for Education and Employment had already submitted evidence to the pay review body, "that there should be a new category of teacher called the advanced skills teachers".

This would provide targeted rewards for the best teachers in the system, to keep them in the profession and to stop them moving out of the classroom and into administration.

"They can dedicate themselves to improving the quality of education our children receive by excellent classroom teaching," Mr Byers said.

"What we're saying is that there is new money for education. We're going to dedicate that to employ more teachers, to provide better books and equipment and improve the environment in our schools. That's the real world."

"That's what parents want. They would say, 'why pay double-figure increases for teachers?' which is what the unions have submitted. And you know, most teachers would recognise that's the reality as well."

The fact that Labour minis-

ters are to stand by the Tory government's public sector spending targets — along with its pay restraint — was well publicised by Labour during the election campaign, and generated union criticism at the time.

The Senior Salaries Review Body recommended big pay rises for MPs and ministers in July last year, and they were passed by a Commons vote, to take effect the day after the 1 May election.

The Cabinet agreed not to take the rise immediately, holding it back until next year. The Prime Minister's salary remains at £102,417, rather than the £145,860 that had been recommended before the election.

Nigel Evans, a Conservative front-bench spokesman, said yesterday: "The ministers' pay rise is the clearest example yet of Labour rank hypocrisy. They must believe the British people have the memories of goldfish."

"Only 12 months ago they were attacking business fat cats, and yet now they accept 20 per cent pay rises at the same time as they tell nurses they can only have 3 per cent. Their noses are so far into the trough that you barely see the soles of their feet."

DAILY POEM

On Seeing a Wounded Hare Limp by Me, Which a Fellow Had Just Shot At

By Robert Burns

Inhuman man! curse on thy barb'rous art,
And bludge be thy murder-aiming eye;
May never play soothe thee with a sigh,
Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart!

Go live, poor wanderer of the wood and field,
The bliner lute that of life remains:
No more the thickening brakes and verdant plains
To thee shall home, or food, or pasture yield.

Seek, mangled wretch, some place of wonted rest,
No more of rest, but now thy dying bed!
The shuddering rushes whistling o'er thy head,
The cold earth with thy bloody bosom prest.

Off as by winding Nith I musing wait
The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn,
I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,
And curse the ruffian's aim, and mourn thy hapless fate.

This week's poems come from *The Faber Book of Beasts*: an anthology of "some of the best poems in English about the creatures who share our planet", edited by Paul Muldoon (Faber & Faber, £14.99).

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Motoring: Britain's environment agency encourages employees to get behind the wheel, while the EU turns to pedestrians' safety

Green watchdog drives staff mad

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

The environmental watchdog run by the Government is in thrall to the car culture, claim some of the regulator's staff. The Environment Agency is aggressively promoting its own car-leasing scheme among almost half of its 9,000 employees, with claims of "worry-free motoring".

The more on-the-job mileage the employees do, the larger and more powerful a car the staff members are entitled to.

"There are, of course, advantages to the individual in having a lease car, especially as it is available for private use," says an explanatory booklet sent to *The Independent* by a disgruntled staffer.

"Employees will be free of the worry of road tax, insurance, maintenance and unexpected and expensive repair bills."

The agency has no mileage allowance for using bicycles on work journeys, nor any loan scheme to encourage bike purchase. It has 1,715 of its own vehicles and only a few dozen bicycles used by its water bailiffs.

It gives its staff no incentives or instructions to use public

transport rather than cars. Furthermore, a growing number of the watchdog's many offices in England and Wales are in edge-of-town or rural locations, badly served or completely missed by buses and trains.

The leasing scheme is open to any member of staff doing at least 5,000 miles a year on business. The employee has to pay 29 per cent of the leasing cost, and gets a mileage allowance for work-related journeys. He or she can use the car for up to 15,000 private miles each year and can take it overseas.

As well as covering insurance and garage bills, the lease scheme offers a replacement in the event of breakdown, theft or accident. Staff who join get a new car of their choice, which they can swap for another new vehicle after four years or 80,000 miles.

The agency sees the scheme as a money-saver – it is cheaper than letting employees use their own cars for work journeys and claiming a higher mileage allowance. It also ensures that staff drive around in vehicles with smog-curbing catalytic converters rather than badly tuned, highly polluting old bangers.



Smog culture: A cyclist dodges the city traffic among the tightly packed cars and double-deckers of a busy London street; the Environment Agency is offering a car-leasing scheme to any employee clocking up more than 5,000 business miles per year

To seduce staff members into joining, it is offering a "holiday" on their share of the lease costs of up to 14 months, worth a saving of more than £1,000. So far up to 2,000 staff have joined, but

about the same number still use their own cars.

The most questionable part of the scheme is the way it allows staff with the highest mileage to have the most gas-

guzzling, greenhouse-gas producing cars. Those doing at least 15,000 miles a year are entitled to a petrol engine up to 2,000cc or a diesel up to 2,500cc. Between 15,000 and 10,000 miles

the maximum is an 1,800cc petrol engine. Under 10,000 miles it is 1,600cc petrol, or 1,905cc diesel.

A spokeswoman for the agency said it felt staff spend-

ing long hours on motorways needed larger, more powerful cars. "This was done on comfort and safety grounds."

She said that in monitoring and regulating industry, rivers

and waste dumps scattered around the country, agency staff could never do their jobs using only public transport and bicycles.

But some staff have been writing to the agency's internal paper to complain about what they see as pro-car policies. Douglas Paulley, from the North East Region, says it "seems hypocritical and unnecessary".

But in the same latest issue the agency's director of personnel, Giles Duncan, responds in a way which will have all cyclists gritting their teeth. "I admire people who cycle to work – they must realise, though, that not everyone can. Nor are we going to send our pollution inspectors wobbling off on a bike to visit ICI. So let's keep our sense of proportion."



Driving force: A Mercedes C-class (above) and the Ford Mondeo – both were tested for 'pedestrian friendliness'



Cars to wear soft bonnets and skirts

Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

Motor manufacturers are facing their greatest challenge – to prevent pedestrians from serious injury in a collision with a car.

Neil Kinnock, the EU Transport Commissioner, is spearheading a drive to reduce the number of pedestrians killed on the roads. Last year, more than 8,000 people lost their lives on highways in Europe.

A draft directive is in the pipeline, which would mean that no one should suffer serious injury in collision with a car travelling at 25mph. Mr Kinnock said in July that he would be introducing legislation next year.

"No car on the road at present would meet that," said Gary Brown, project engineer at Mira, the centre for automotive research. The proposals would require new models, from 2000, to pass stringent "head-and-leg" tests.

Trials conducted by the Transport Research Laboratory earlier this year show that today's cars would not pass the "pedestrian friendliness" criteria. Plastic heads and legs were thrown at 13 family saloons to see what damage a human would sustain. The results were conclusive.

"No car tested provides sufficient protection to meet the proposed legislation," said the researchers. Among those tested were the Ford Mondeo, the Mercedes C-class and the Vauxhall Vectra.

Manufacturers face completely overhauling the bonnets and bumpers to meet the draft directive. Car-makers claim that

the alterations – developing an energy-absorbing nose, changing the bonnet shape and introducing a safety skirt – would put up the price of a saloon by £1,500.

Safety experts are unimpressed. In 1995, 686 pedestrians lost their lives in collisions with cars on Britain's roads. "These type of cost benefits calculations are not realistic," said Murray Mackay, professor of transport safety at Birmingham University. "We used to have toughened glass windcreens years ago and it was said then that laminated glass would be too expensive. So 1,000 eyes were needlessly blinded."

Motoring trade associations have labelled the latest proposals "safety fiction". "Cars and pedestrians are incompatible," says James Rosenstein, a spokesman for the ACEA, which represents car manufacturers in Europe. "If you soften a car front then you reduce the risk to pedestrians and increase it for the car's occupants. It is not a simple thing."

Professor Mackay also disputes the car-makers' claim that most of the damage is done not by the car but by bodies bouncing off pavements. "We proved in the early Eighties that it was the initial impact that caused the damage."

The Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety believes that the number of pedestrians killed in car crashes would drop by 7 per cent, and serious injuries would be cut by more than a fifth by the changes.

A spokesman for the RAC said: "...it is more important to save lives than to look good."

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Airport loses no sleep over night flights

Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

Night flights do not affect people's sleep, according to an expert representing the Government and BAA, the owner of Heathrow airport, at the long-running public inquiry into proposals for a fifth terminal.

Dr John Ollerhead, a researcher at the Civil Aviation Authority, the Government's safety regulator, is scheduled to take the stand at the inquiry at the end of this month. He is not expected to deviate from the fruits of his work for the Department of Transport, which in 1992 led him to conclude that "very few people living near airports are at risk of any substantial sleep disturbance due to aircraft noise, even at the highest event noise levels".

The Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions agrees with Dr Ollerhead's analysis. Elizabeth Duthie, a civil servant from the department, has submitted evidence to the inquiry which states: "The number of disturbances caused by aircraft noise is so small that it has a negligible effect on overall normal disturbance rates".

Residents disagree. Tom Jacobs, a retired physics lecturer, lives under one of the two flight-paths. He has told the inspector in charge of the inquiry, Roy Vandermeer QC, that "noisier planes will wake me, even with the bedroom windows

closed". Another resident told the inquiry that her family was woken up every day at 6am. "It is incredibly unpleasant to wake up to the sound of screaming machines in the sky," she said.

Mr Vandermeer is to witness the effects of early morning departures. He is planning to stay in a hotel in Richmond to judge the likelihood of being woken up by the 16 arrivals and departures that occur before 6am. Campaigners, who oppose Terminal 5, are keen to highlight the noise issue. "We think the Government's research is fundamentally flawed. Our evidence shows that thousands of people are affected by these early morning flights," said Dermot Cox, chairman of the Heathrow anti-noise group, Hacan.

Even if Terminal 5 does not get the green light, campaigners fear that the pressure for more night flights will continue. Mr Cox points out that British Airways, which operates more than a third of all take-offs and landings at Heathrow, has told Mr Vandermeer that the airline "will recommend an easing of the limit on the number of night flights permitted".

BAA claims that despite a 60 per cent increase in passenger numbers, should Terminal 5 go ahead, there would be "no change in noise levels". A spokesman added that the "situation will not worsen than it is today. Terminal 5 will not mean more noise for the 500,000 local residents".



Dawn chorus: An early morning flight coming in to land at Heathrow. Experts contend that the noise levels are unlikely to disrupt local people's sleep. Photograph: John Lawrence

Brown acts to ease Third World debts

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Gordon Brown will tomorrow launch an international initiative to lift the burden of debt payments from the world's poorest nations by the start of the new millennium.

In a speech he is to give to the annual meeting of finance ministers from Commonwealth countries, the Chancellor of

the Exchequer will also announce that Britain is to stop granting official export credits for "unproductive" spending on items such as military equipment and presidential jets by Third World countries. He will call for other countries to take the same action, which would

choke off sales of these items to developing nations if they all followed Britain's lead. The Chancellor will also chal-

lenge other rich nations to follow Britain in cancelling loans made to poor countries through its aid programme.

Mr Brown's bid to give new impetus to an international programme of debt reduction for extremely poor countries in Africa and Latin America will delight the "Jubilee 2000" campaign run by churches, unions and other organisations, which has been calling for the devel-

oped world to write off completely the overhang of loans that poor countries owe to rich governments and organisations like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

Although the Chancellor does not go that far, he will praise the churches for recognising that the millennium offers a means of taking forward the debt-relief programme. In an echo of the other campaign,

the working title for the Government's new initiative is "Debt 2000".

The UK has long taken the lead in pushing for extra help for a group of very poor countries which can never hope to earn enough from exports to pay their interest bills, no matter how well they run their economies. Mr Brown's Conservative predecessor, Kenneth Clarke, won heartfelt praise from Commonwealth finance ministers this time last year for the role he had played in getting agreement to the existing IMF-World Bank debt-relief initiative.

Launched with much fanfare in Washington last autumn, it has been strongly criticised by aid charities for being slow and inflexible.

Mr Brown's new proposals call on the international community to revive the impetus by making sure that all the countries which could qualify for debt relief - about 49 of them - have at least started by 2000 on the six-year process of assessment and economic reforms that lead to reduced payments. The Chancellor will say that it is a "demanding but realistic" target.

The proposals would not necessarily require developed country governments to provide more funds on top of the modest \$7.4bn that the existing plan is likely to cost them. A call for extra money would go badly as the lenders are still arguing over the financing already needed.

However, Mr Brown wants to ensure that the plan does not run into the sand. His first visit to the IMF's annual meetings, which start in Hong Kong after the Commonwealth meeting in Mauritius this week, offers the chance to set a firm timetable.

He will present his plan as a challenge to the borrowers as well as the lenders. The indebted countries which make the fastest progress on economic reform, and introduce the most open and accountable policies, should be rewarded with faster debt relief, he will say.

The speech will set out a seven-point plan to bring heavily indebted countries to a position from which they can export goods and improve prosperity without seeing all their overseas earnings swallowed up in interest payments to the richest nations on earth.

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The IMF is wrong about the best path to growth, say charities

Diane Coyle

Leading charities have called for a new approach to the reduction of poverty in developing countries, and criticised the international community for dragging its heels on writing off the debts of the world's poorest nations.

Two separate reports issued today call into question the policies of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank as they prepare for the start of their annual meetings. The aid agencies, Oxfam International and Christian Aid,

accuse the IMF in particular of being unwilling to take effective action to help the poor.

Oxfam says the East Asian experience during the past three decades shows that reducing inequality and tackling poverty is the most effective path to economic growth. "Economic success has been accompanied by a silent revolution of poverty reduction. More people have moved out of poverty more quickly than at any time in history," it says.

The report says that, contrary to received wisdom in the IMF and World Bank that growth will

"trickle down" to relieve poverty, the link actually runs the other way. Policies that raise the incomes of the rural poor, and limit inequality by offering health, education and other services to the very poor, lead to economic success.

It emphasises the contrast between the relatively equal East Asian economies and the lack of economic success enjoyed by very unequal countries such as Brazil, Mexico and Zimbabwe. For example, growth in Mexico's national income has had to be four times as great as South Korea's to increase the incomes

of the poorest tenth of the population by an equivalent amount.

"Equity is good for growth," the report concludes. It criticises the IMF for ignoring the increased poverty and inequality that resulted from its 1995 financial "rescue package" for the Mexican economy.

Christian Aid criticised the IMF for its lack of progress on the package of debt relief agreed at last year's annual meeting. "From governments to campaigners, no one has been impressed with the effort shown by the IMF."

Whistleblowers poised to win legal protection

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

Whistleblowers who alert the public or media to fraud or other criminal practices could soon be protected, because the Government is considering giving its support to a new law that would safeguard their jobs.

Richard Shepherd, a Tory MP, drawn tenth in the Private Members' Bill ballot, is putting forward a whistleblowers' Bill which could only pass with government support. Public Concern at Work, the body which gives legal advice to whistleblowers, is confident, however, that it will become law.

Many Labour MPs, several of whom are now on the front bench, have expressed support for the legislation. Guy Dehn, the director of Public Concern at Work, said: "I am sure that there will be whistleblowing legislation by the end of this parliamentary session".

In its annual report published today, Public Concern outlines a series of cases where whistleblowers have prevented the continuation of crimes in or-



Richard Shepherd: Bill likely to have government support

ganisations, both in the public and private sectors.

In one case, Judith Jones, the deputy matron at Denison House, a small private nursing home in Selby, North Yorkshire, noticed semen on an old woman's cardigan and hair. Suspecting that the owner of the home, John Tiplady, was abusing the residents, Ms Jones contacted Public Concern at

Work and was eventually able to obtain evidence which led to Tiplady's conviction and a four-year jail sentence.

Another case involved the non-executive directors of an NHS trust who were concerned over the way that the trust was being run by the chief executive, including the authorisation of large ex-gratia payments to senior employees without board approval. Their complaints eventually led to the early retirement of the chief executive.

Public Concern at Work received 500 requests for legal help in the past year and 219 of these clients had evidence of serious malpractice at work. However, some of those who approached the organisation could not be offered help because of the lack of legal protection.

An accountant who is being forced to submit fraudulent bonus claims to a manufacturer, showing a lesser profit than the company is making on the sale of vehicles, has not been able to alert the authorities because of fears he would be sacked. Told that there could be no legal protection, he wrote to

the organisation: "The employment laws need to be strengthened to stop unscrupulous employers."

Mr Dehn says: "Almost all inquiries into major disasters report that staff had seen the dangers but either had been too scared to sound the alarm or had raised the matter with the wrong person or in the wrong way."

He said these included the rail inspector who did not report the loose wiring prior to the Clapham train crash that killed 35 people, and the five warnings that ferries were sailing with open bow doors before the Zebrugge disaster which killed 193. The collapses of Barlow Clowes, BCCI and Robert Maxwell's group were also compounded by the "culture of fear and silence" within those companies, he said.

Whistleblowing legislation would give the protection of the industrial tribunal to people who had "reasonable grounds" to alert the authorities to misbehaviour within their organisation.

The whistleblowers' hotline is on 0171 404 6609.

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Russians plan floating nuclear plant

Phil Reeves
Moscow

A floating nuclear power-station – the world's first – is to be built by Russia in the Arctic, despite concern about the damage to the region inflicted by years of atomic-weapons testing, the reckless dumping and storage of radioactive materials, and fall-out from the Chernobyl disaster.

The Russian government has confirmed it plans to locate the plant on a vessel in Pevek, a remote and sparsely populated port town in Russia's Far East, 215 miles north of the Arctic Circle.

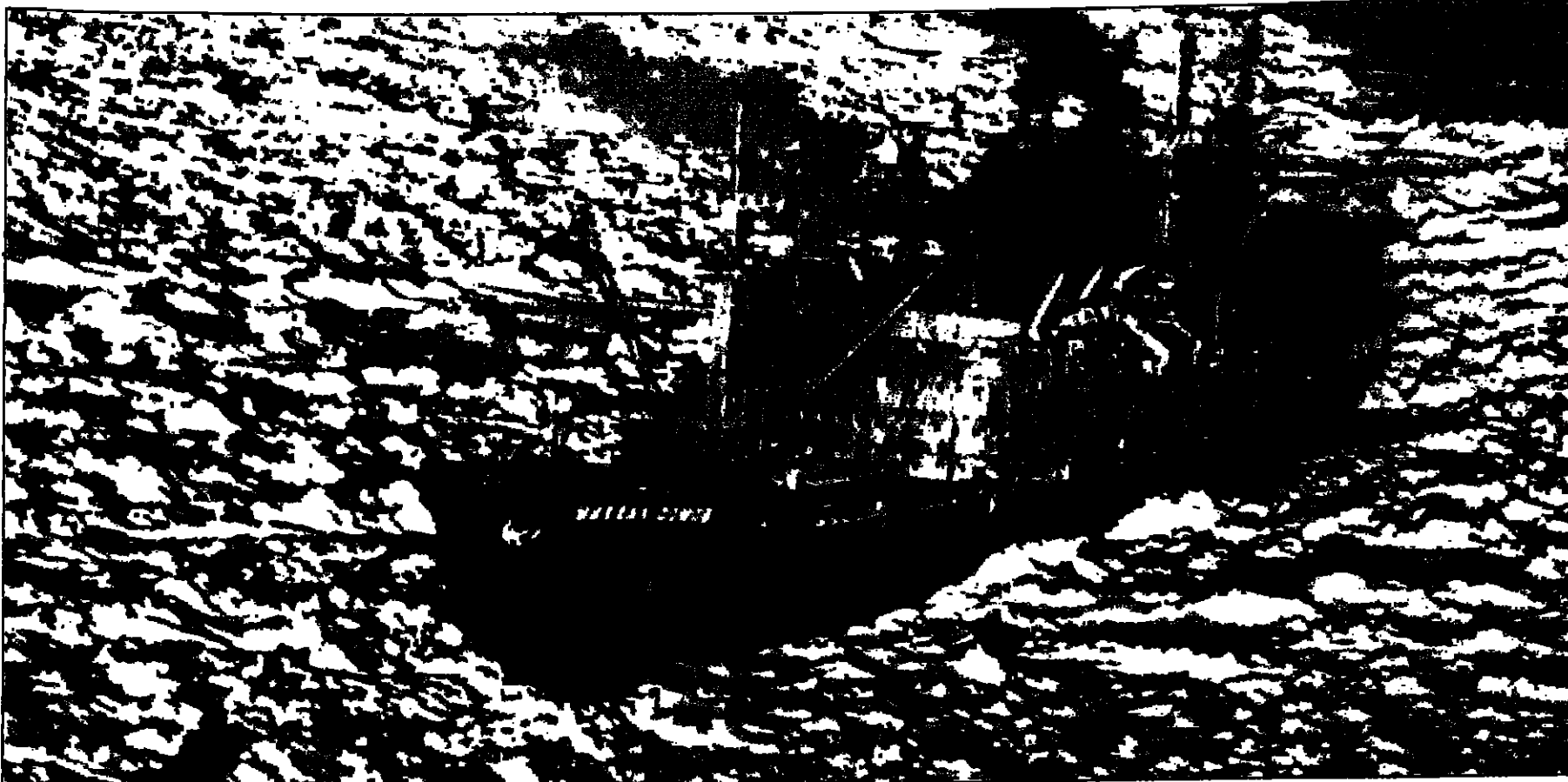
The \$254m (£150m) station will be powered by two pressurised-water reactors adapted from Russian nuclear-powered icebreakers, a fleet which has long been cited by Western safety experts as a source of severe environmental threat.

Every 13 years the plant will be towed by barge to Murmansk, near the Finnish border – a journey of 2,500 miles, which will take it from one end of Russia to the other – for a refit and to reload with fuel.

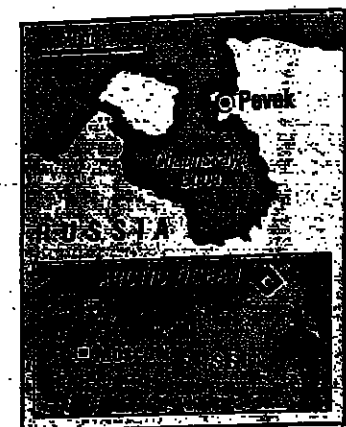
The project drew immediate condemnation from Greenpeace in Moscow. "This is very threatening to the environment," said Andrei Simy-onov, a spokesman. "Any nuclear waste that ends up in the sea will be distributed more quickly than on the earth itself."

The plan is certain to arouse fears about what would happen if the power-plant sank. It would not be the first vessel laden with radioactive material to do so: in 1989 the Soviet nuclear submarine *Komsomolets* went down in the sea 300 miles off Norway after a fire on board.

It had nuclear fuel in its reactor and nuclear warheads on board, but both Russian and international



Cold comfort: A Russian icebreaker at work. Reactors from atomic-powered vessels will be used for the new power-station. Photograph: AP



by eight Arctic nations, including Russia, warned that the region's ecological system was far more vulnerable to radioactive contamination than elsewhere. It identified a "large number" of radioactive sources in the region, including storage of spent nuclear fuel, decommissioned nuclear submarines and nuclear reactors.

The Russians say the Pevek station – which is to stand in the east Siberian sea – is the first of its kind. It may not be the last; if they can raise the money they want to build two more.

Claims by Russia's former security chief, Alexander Lebed, that Russia has lost track of scores of tactical nuclear weapons were partly supported yesterday by his former deputy, Vladimir Denisov, an ex-deputy head of the Security Council, said an investigation last year had been unable to rule out that small nuclear bombs were left behind in former Soviet republics.

surveys found no evidence of substantial contamination.

The Pevek project comes amid international anxiety about Russia's nuclear-power programme, which has been reactivated after coming to a standstill following the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Western and Russian scientists are alarmed about the lack of safety standards in Russia's nuclear fleet (it has more than 200

nuclear-powered submarines) and within its 99 nuclear facilities, including 29 nuclear power-stations.

Ageing and inadequate equipment, dangerous storage, a lack of safety consciousness and an absence of effective independent regulatory bodies top the list of concerns. So does the lack of funds: in July, nuclear workers from four power stations grew so desperate about pay

arrears that they marched to Moscow from the Smolensk nuclear power-plant, a 400-mile journey that took two weeks.

Russia's Ministry of Atomic Energy (Minatom) says the floating station has been approved by the International Atomic Energy Agency. It argues the plant is needed to replace a far more costly, 40-year-old coal-powered station, for

which 100,000 tons of coal have to be shipped in every year. The fact that the region it will mostly supply, Chukotka, is rapidly depopulating has not derailed the plan; in the past four years half the 12,300 population of Pevek have left.

The Russians – who have been fiercely criticised for dumping nuclear reactors and other radioactive waste in the Kara and Barents seas

and the Sea of Japan – say spent nuclear fuel will be kept on board the floating station, and not dumped. Such assurances may not convince environmentalists worried by the level of pollution in the Arctic, which has been contaminated by nuclear weapons tests, releases from nuclear fuel reprocessing plants and Chernobyl fall-out.

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Date is set for the great euro currency merger

Katherine Butler
Mondorf-les-Bains,
Luxembourg

Europe's finance ministers have taken a crucial step on the road to the single European currency, by agreeing at the weekend that the rates at which German marks, French francs and other currencies joining Economic and Monetary Union will convert to Euros, will be announced next May.

This will bring forward a key piece of the EMU jigsaw by eight months and will sharply increase pressure on Britain to finally decide whether to join the common currency during the first wave in January 1999.

The move is a pre-emptive strike against potentially damaging market turbulence once the list of countries qualifying for EMU is announced in May, and reflects a growing political determination to ensure that the single currency starts on time.

In talks at the Luxembourg spa resort of Mondorf-les-Bains, ministers agreed the identity of the first batch of EMU entrants and the conversion parities to apply from 1 January 1999 will be announced simultaneously. This is what brings forward a major piece of the EMU jigsaw. "From the time of the announcement we will *de facto* have a piece of monetary union in place," said Hans Tietmeyer, the president of the Bundesbank.

It had always been assumed that the announcement on exchange rate parities would come only on the eve of the EMU starting date, when currencies will be irrevocably locked.

Yves Thibault de Silguy, EU commissioner for monetary affairs, predicted the early announcement would enhance the credibility of the EMU timetable by warning financial speculators that their scope to

gamble on likely conversion parities between May 1998 and January 1999 will be limited.

How the rates will be determined remains unresolved. The likeliest option is to use central rates within the EU's currency grid, the ERM.

The weekend's important and highly symbolic decision, coupled with improving prospects for economic recovery in France and Germany, mean hopes are higher than they have been for months that a delay in the EMU timetable can be avoided.

Britain therefore faces intensified pressure to step up preparations for the impact on both sterling and business of a Euro launch in less than 16 months time.

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, repeated at the weekend that the Government is committed to keeping Britain's options open. But his approach to the talks,

significantly more constructive than that of the Tories, have fuelled speculation in Mondorf that Tony Blair's government is positioning itself for early second-wave membership if EMU is seen to be working.

Mr Brown announced in Luxembourg that the Government wants a "vigorous debate" in Britain on the preparations for EMU, to warn business and consumers that "in or out" they will be affected. This recognition from the British government that EMU is no longer in doubt was being seen by some EU diplomats as further evidence of a significant shift in the British attitude.

Britain's more positive strategy is partly influenced by the fear that the United Kingdom could be politically sidelined as EMU-participating countries, led by the French and Germans, start to collaborate more closely on a wide range of economic policy issues from 1999.

France appeared at the weekend to retreat from its earlier demands that the Euro be run by an "economic government", though officials believe an informal structure of "in" governments, separate from EU finance ministers, is inevitable once the Euro is launched.

Ministers are already taking the first tentative steps towards co-ordinating taxation, which is seen by France and Germany as indispensable after the single currency. At Mondorf, they authorised the European Commission to draw up detailed proposals for a code of conduct to iron out the discrepancies between tax systems which allow EU governments to bid against each other for foreign investment and jobs. Competition to lure companies through cut-price corporation tax is being blamed by Brussels for the rise in employment taxes and social security contributions, and the effect that has in killing jobs.

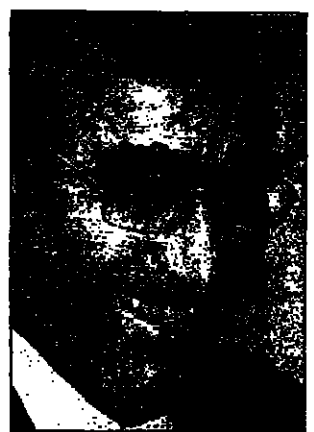
Germany wants its money back

Katherine Butler

Germany and the Netherlands have told other European governments they want their money back.

Theo Waigel, the German finance minister used the first round of talks on what will happen to EU finances as the bloc expands into Eastern Europe, to fire the opening shots in what promises to become a bitter row. He was backed by Gerrit Zalm, the Dutch minister who went so far as to threaten to veto enlargement if the net contributors to the £60bn annual budget are not given a fairer deal.

The move threatens the special budget rebate won by Margaret Thatcher for Britain in 1984 when she shocked fellow EU leaders by thumping the table and demanding that the UK, one of the smallest direct beneficiaries of EU handouts, should have its cash returned. Clearly concerned that Britain's rebate could now come under scrutiny, Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, called instead at the weekend for a radical reduction in spending on agriculture. "The debate must start to focus on whether money is being properly used," he said.



Theo Waigel: Wants to end Germany's paymaster role

Spain, Greece and Ireland, which receive several times more in direct aid than they put into the EU budget, accused the Germans and Dutch of calling into question the solidarity principle on which the EU is founded. Charlie McCreery, Ireland's finance minister, said the Union would cease to exist if every member state wanted back exactly what it put into the budget.

Germany, for years the EU's paymaster, contributes around 25 per cent of the total budget based on a formula under which

member states pay in up to 1.27 per cent of their GDP. German reunification led to a big increase in the size of German GDP and a corresponding increase in its EU dues. Among the net contributors, Germany claims to pay around 60 per cent of the bills.

Now, desperate to slash the country's huge public deficit in time to qualify for monetary union in 1999, Bonn is casting around for every last pfennig.

Mr Zalm, meanwhile, who insists his country is not even among the five richest EU nations, circulated figures at the meeting claiming the Netherlands pays most in terms of *per capita* income. But the Dutch figures were dismissed by officials from poorer countries as "lies" because they include millions of pounds in customs duties which the Netherlands, one of the EU's biggest transit countries, receives on imports destined for other countries.

Germany and the Netherlands have enlisted support from newcomer Sweden which also wants a root-and-branch budget reform.

But Jacques Santer, the EU Commission President, reminded the bigger countries that

the benefits or costs of membership of the EU could not be quantified purely in terms of the budget. The modernisation of Athens airport, he pointed out, was paid for out of the EU's regional fund but the construction

contracts went to Dutch and German firms.

Mr Santer has now promised to bring forward an objective assessment of each country's payments and receipts from the Brussels budget.



Flag day: The Solidarnosc banner dominates the scene on the hill of the Jasna Gora monastery in Czestochowa where 200,000 people gathered for a workers' pilgrimage before Polish elections this week. Photograph: AFP

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Hizbollah rejoices in Israel's revenge

Robert Fisk
Beirut

Only a week after the Hizbollah's leader, Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, displayed parts of a dead Israeli soldier killed in southern Lebanon and offered to exchange them for guerrilla bodies in Israeli hands, the Israeli army has killed Nasrallah's eldest son during a confrontation in the south of the country.

In an unprecedented announcement, the Hizbollah themselves announced that 18-year-old Hadi Nasrallah was shot along with two of his colleagues near the zone that Israel occupies north of its border. Within 24 hours, two more Israelis were killed in apparent retaliation.

Sayed Nasrallah addressed a rally of 2,000 of his supporters on Saturday afternoon, expressing what he called his "pride" in his son's death. "I thank God and praise him for his ultimate grace and kindness in choosing a martyr from my family," he said.

The Hizbollah emphasised that no special attention would be paid to Hadi Nasrallah's

body in the list of dead guerrillas whom they want returned to Lebanon for burial.

First news of the man's identity and fate was brought to Beirut by the lone Hizbollah survivor of the raid against one of Israel's military positions inside Lebanon.

But Nasrallah later identified his son from a videotape taken of two of the Hizbollah dead in the mortuary at Marjayoun hospital north of the Israeli frontier.

The two Israelis killed on Saturday morning were blown up by a roadside bomb left by the Hizbollah east of Tyre. One of the soldiers died instantly and the other died later from his wounds.

Yesterday's explosion followed just two days after the Israelis attacked the Lebanese army east of Sidon - killing six of its soldiers - in retaliation for the Lebanese army's role in the virtual annihilation of an Israeli unit attempting to ambush the Hizbollah near Sidon last month.

Lebanese troops are now under orders to fire at any Israeli soldiers inside the country

and Israel's revenge - though it might have been expected - surprised the army.

According to Lebanese military sources, an Israeli helicopter fired a missile at a Lebanese armoured personnel carrier, wounding the soldier inside. As his five comrades were trying to carry him to safety the helicopter reportedly returned and fired another missile at the rescuers, killing all of them along with the wounded man.

The latest Israeli deaths bring their fatalities in their south Lebanon occupation zone to 33 this year, 12 of them in the bungled raid 10 days ago and two more burned to death by a brush fire started by Israel's own artillery shells. A 42-year-old Lebanese woman and her baby were killed when the Israeli raiders were ambushed and six other Lebanese civilians - including a baby - were killed last month when Israel's own proxy militia fired shells for an hour into the centre of Sidon.

If there is a message in all this, it is a simple one: that the conflict in southern Lebanon is once again in danger of exploding into all-out war.

Collision fear over planes

Inna Karacs
Bonn

A German military airplane with 24 people on board crashed into the sea off the West African coast, the defence minister announced yesterday. The aircraft, an eight-year-old Tupolev inherited from the East German army, disappeared about 1,000 miles west of Angola on Saturday.

"We can only assume that the plane has crashed and that all 24 passengers on board are dead," the minister, Volker Rütge, said in Bonn. On board were 12 marines, 10 crew and the wives of two crew members.

A defence ministry source said he understood a US cargo plane with nine on board was also missing off Angola. "It cannot be ruled out that the missing [German] plane possibly collided with an American military aircraft and crashed," a defence ministry spokesman said.

The marines had been invited to Cape Town for a regatta celebrating the 75th anniversary of the South African navy. German aircrews are allowed to take partners on one trip a year because they are rarely at home.

Mr Rütge said radio contact with the plane, which took off from Bonn, was lost on Saturday afternoon. "We believe the

accident occurred very swiftly... There is still uncertainty as to where the aircraft actually crashed, he said."

The German aircraft was identified as a Soviet-built Tupolev TU-154 jet, built in 1989. Two Tupolevs have been in the service of the Luftwaffe since German unification in 1990.

A German Airbus with a search team on board was due to fly out to the region last night.

A second German airforce aircraft was due to follow the route of the crashed plane to South Africa from Dakar in Senegal, via Windhoek in Namibia, in search of clues.

arts

Nothing going on but the songs



Jaded Jack Flash: Liam Gallagher eschews rock 'n' roll antics (on stage) and lets his voice do the talking

Oasis launched their national tour in Exeter on Saturday. Though perhaps launch is too dynamic a word, writes **Magnus Mills**

When Liam Gallagher wanders round and round on stage he looks completely lost, like the blokes at the back of the auditorium wandering round with pints of lager searching for their mates. And when he returns to the microphone his chosen stance isn't very much more interesting.

It makes you wonder why the "great" rock 'n' roll lead singers of the past went to such efforts as they did. Anyone who saw Robert Plant brushing the floor with his hair while not bending at the knees, Mick Jagger publicly jerking and strutting, or Ian Gillan shaking violently as he invented head-banging, may consider Liam slightly wooden. All he does is stand there with an odd stoop, his hands clasped behind his back as if his forearms have been lashed together. This is how he would have to stand if he were wearing a strait-jacket instead of a purple blue parka. At other times he squats down on the stage and gazes at the audience, because Liam Gallagher has the gift of a great voice.

That whine of his is capable of cutting above any amount of guitar feedback and distortion Noel Gal-

lagher can produce. The other three (who should be given some collective name, such as "the stoneheads") don't do anything except concentrate on their instruments for the entire show, but that doesn't matter either. It's the Oasis sound that people have come for, and nobody really seems bothered that there's nothing going on up on stage.

Good job, really. Apart from the deliberately wonky stage-set, consisting of a Rolls-Royce drum kit (registration number SYO 124F), a giant backwards clock and a top-sided phone box, there's nothing much to see. Indeed, the greatest cheer of the evening came when the band first emerged from the phone box at the beginning of the act. After that, the four musicians remained firmly rooted in place while Liam drifted around and sang from time to time.

It was tempting to question whether the enthusiastic Oasis crowd packing out this giant corrugated shed in Devon had ever seen any other bands to compare them with. The ones who were picked up after the gig by their parents in cars most probably hadn't. But wait, there were people here wearing T-shirts that proved they'd been to Reading, and even Glastonbury. They

can't all be wrong can they? Or are they?

No, they can't. When you see Oasis perform "Roll With It", "Some Might Say", and "D'You Know What I Mean?" in a row, like a gambler laying down a royal flush, you get to know the meaning of the word great. That's actually the Gallagher brothers up there! The only difference between them and The Beatles is that they've played on *Top of the Pops*.

And don't forget that Noel Gallagher can sing as well (in his own way.) He and Liam shared the vocals on "Acquiesce", the single encore song, and probably the rockiest composition in their entire set, as well as being their best-ever B-side. Noel also undertook several extensive forays on the lead guitar, notably a soaring eight minute solo at the end of "Champagne Supernova". Unfortunately, his association with lead guitar is more in the manner of Dave Hill or (listen closely) Justin Hayward, rather than, say, Jimmy Page or Rory Gallagher, so there were no guys down the front playing air. But it's obvious he could do a lot more with the instrument if he so chose. In fact, if it weren't for all the girls shouting the name of Liam, he could probably do it all on his own.

Last Saturday saw the Last Night of the Proms and the first night of the Royal Opera's exile at the Barbican. **Robert Cowan** and **Edward Seckerson** were at the respective venues...

PROMS

Verdi Requiem; Last Night Royal Albert Hall, London / R3

Between Hyde Park and the Royal Albert Hall, upwards of 40,000 people sang their sorrows away as candles flickered, lanterns shone and we all huddled from what Terry Wogan had mischievously described as a "gentle zephyr". At mid-afternoon, police on horseback surveyed the lengthening queues and crane-mounted speakers kept Mozart on a low burn. By 5.30, the Park was at least half full and Ed Stewart provided panto-style links between the Pasadena Roof Orchestra, the Classic Buskers (and the fastest *Marriage of Figaro* overture you've ever heard), an irrepressible George Melly (dressed in red) and the Thames Valley Chorus.

Heathrow-bound jets eavesdropped from on high, the strengthening gusts bombarded the microphones and as dusk fell, so did the tempera-

ture. As to the main concert and the first-half "link-up" with Radio 2 (they actually relayed the whole concert), Wogan proved an affable com-pere, easing a course from Strauss through rapturously received solos by Michael Ball, supple Rodrigo from guitarist John Williams and a neat dash of Scott Joplin from Joshua Rifkin. Robin Stapleton and the BBC Concert Orchestra gave us bracing Denza and Eric Coates (a jaunty reminder of nearby Knightsbridge), but credit for the climax must go to composer Bill Whelan, members of the Riverdance Com-

pany and thundering drums. They were simply sensational. Wogan reminded us that the Park had been transformed from "a grieving place into a joyous scene", though when Michael Ball stilled us with "Love Changes Everything" and "You'll Never Walk Alone", the candles seemed to burn even brighter. Such was the mood of the place, and yet the video link with Andrew Davis and his BBC forces at the Royal Albert Hall prompted a wild waving of arms and a fervent welter of patriotic singing.

Earlier, Wayne Marshall swung high and low with Gershwin's *I Got Rhythm* variations, and back in the Park harmonica veteran Larry Adler summoned the composer's piano roll as accompanist for Porgy's "Summertime". John Adams's momentarily inappropriate *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* was replaced by Diana's favourite "Jupiter", but at the previous night's Prom you would have heard what was described as "her favourite piece of classical music", Verdi's Requiem Mass.

Although Andrew Davis's Last Night speech commemorated Princess Diana, Mother Teresa and Sir George Solti, it was the reference to Solti that inspired spontaneous applause. Sir George had of course origi-

nally been scheduled to conduct the Requiem, but on Friday night Sir Colin Davis took the reins for a performance that, although possibly less elemental than Solti's would have been, was warmly communicative and climaxed to an overwhelmingly powerful account of the Libera me. Davis's approach was weighty, malleable (plenty of flexibility, tempo-wise) and usefully accommodating to his singers. The gentle "Introit" suggested deep inward communion; the Dies irae's bass drum had the impact of cannon fire (in addition, trumpeters echoed each other from exit points at each side of the main stage) and the sprightly Sanctus found the combined London Voices and London Symphony Chorus on cracking good form. The soloists were splendid, too.

Mezzo-soprano Olga Borodina excelled in her lower registers and tenor Frank Lopardo's soft singing was extraordinarily beautiful (especially in his "Ingemisco" solo). Soprano Michèle Crider and bass René Pape gave strong, committed performances and the work's closing pages were tailored by one of the longest and most meaningful silences that I have ever witnessed in a concert hall. The programme booklet carried a photograph of Princess Diana in happy dialogue with Sir George, and it was appropriate that this penultimate Prom should honour their memories with a work that they both loved dearly.

RC

OPERA

Giulio Cesare Barbican, London

insubstantial, and, most potentially demeaning of all - fey. Because you can play all you like with Handel's theatrical fancies, you can have fun with his wry appropriation of human frailty and folly, but you never, ever confuse irony with camp. And there is the rub. If irony is a pyramid-shaped ice lolly, then you're going to love this show.

Posner has ideas, or at least the beginnings of ideas, but they are at best sketchy. He has clocked, for instance, that Sextus and Ptolemy are both spoilt children at heart, the former, a mummy's boy who must ultimately prove that he is indeed the son of Pompey, and the latter a petulant, thumb-sucking wimp - Cleopatra's fraternal liability. Even so, wit was at a premium here. The first encounter between Cesare and Tolomeo, where veiled threats are exchanged amid formal pleasantries, exhibited some semblance of it, thanks largely to Ann Murray's reading of that most insidiously memorable aria (with horn obbligato unhappily accident-prone) "Va t'indio e nascosto". I fancy it was her idea to share Ptolemy's opium pipe at precisely the point where her florid colouratura might best convey an unexpected but singularly satisfying "high". A bit of honest

mugging. Just as the celebrated Mount Parnassus pageant, Cleopatra's (and Handel's) elaborate entertainment for Cesare, was a bit of honest kitsch. Flown out over the largest of three pyramids conspicuously "borrowed" from just outside the Louvre in Paris (a cheeky contemporary allusion), Cleopatra is Virtue, her voluminous white skirts tumbling down to shroud her most precious inheritance, while a prism in her hand casts a rainbow across the sky. It's precisely that kind of largesse of gesture - an intellectual, spiritual, physical generosity - that I missed most from Posner's staging.

The singing more often than not did provide. Amanda Roocroft's Cleopatra wasn't helped a little bit by her image as a brunette Barbie doll in a shocking pink one-piece. No coquette ever dominated this opera, leave alone Egypt. Roocroft's problem is that the voice itself (flexible and perfectly well-managed) doesn't say a lot. It lacks allure, womanly allure. Perhaps it has matured too soon. She sings prettily and with feeling, but she's inclined to push hard to convey intensity, and the voice is having none of it. Ann Murray, with far

less voice now in practical terms, is the artist that Roocroft strives to be. She took a while to get into her stride, for the sinews to stiffen and the technique to kick in (fabulously determined heroics in Act 3), but by the time we arrived at the great scene "Dall' ondo periglio" she was working her old magic again, refining the chromatics in such a way as to suggest that the Nile breezes themselves were bending the line.

It was perhaps a little unfair on two outstanding counter-tenors (but not us) that they should have found themselves in the same show. Brian Asawa was a voluptuous-voiced Ptolemy, but it was the Sextus of David Daniels (the most natural voice in this *fact* that I've ever encountered) who provided the evening's most fabulous singing. With Catherine Wyn-Rogers (Catherine) dignified as ever in her suffering, mother and son found heart-aching accord at the close of Act 1.

Come the happy ending, artifacts from Cleopatra's Egypt (yes, including her needle) lie wrapped and awaiting transportation to Rome while the deceased leap from their sarcophagi to join in the festivities. Wryly, Ann Murray, thinly disguised as Caesar, casts us one last aside extolling the virtues of Cleopatra's hair. He came, he saw, he conquered, but it was the hair that did it. Now that's irony, and this show needed more of it.

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In the smallest role of Clara, the housekeeper, Patricia Kane damn near steals the show in Gareth Armstrong's highly enjoyable revival of *Hay Fever* at the Salisbury Playhouse. Fert, disapproving servants are far from rare in Coward's plays. One thinks of Miss Hodge in *Design for Living* who waxes all prim and proper about the mistress's love affair with two bisexual men on the grounds that she herself has done things the respectable serial way, chalking up two ex-husbands. "One's dead and the other's in Newcastle," she declares with the connotation that there's nothing to choose between those fates.

It's the fact that she and her employers are as insultingly off-hand and unconventional as each other that gives Clara and the situation its comic edge in *Hay Fever*. Having been dresser to Judith Bliss, the retired actress vaguely planning a comeback, Clara has rather more in common with this bohemian family than she does with the strait-laced, separately invited guests who arrive at the Crockham country retreat on Saturday afternoon and sneak away again on Sunday morning after being subjected to an evening of humiliating games and histrionic attitudinising. A ton of formidable, roly-poly

discontentment in a raffish trailing headband, Ms Kane's Clara stumps around, opening doors that slam straight back in people's faces and looking about as if her element in rural domesticity as a pirate would serving tea at the Admiralty. This production allows her to work off her frustration in an interpolated sequence that turns a scene change into a delightful dance routine. Preparing the breakfast table for the last act, she gets to tap and Charleston and clown around like some stagestruck wannabe Tessie O'Shea (though with rather more delicacy). It's like an inadvertently subversive parody of the shameless theatricalising of her employers.

Polly Adams brings just the right quality of bright, unerring feyness to the role of Judith, the actress who has forgotten how to have an emotion that doesn't veer off into the melodramatics and sentimentality of one of her old parts in stagey trash like *Love's Whirlwind*. Adams's performance emphasises the sheer

pleasure Judith gets from the game of disconcerting innocent guests with displays of utterly trumped-up emotion. At one point, poised between two bouts of arch role-play, she even cools off by blowing down the front of her glittering evening dress. There's a curious innocence to the gesture; it's rather like eavesdropping on a child during an unguarded interval in a let's-pretend fantasy.

Adams and her arty family (Frank Barrie, Lara Bobross and Matthew Carter) expertly communicate the fact that, for all their petty internal quibblings,

the Blisses are united against the rest of the world in the strength of their serene self-absorption. Tucking into their cake at teatime, they positively glow with contentment, quite blind to the discomfort of their empty-handed, inhibited guests (Hannah Cresswell Gulliford, Tim Meats and Adrian Sharp).

The cast are all very good and my one minor cavil with the direction is the decision to have the Blisses rush to the stage-like raised area with the piano when they shock the rest of the party by heading off, unannounced, into the last scene of *Love's Whirlwind*. Wouldn't the guests be more taken off guard if life and theatrics were less crisply separated? Otherwise, this is a production of *Hay Fever* that's not to be sneezed at.

Paul Taylor



In clover: Gareth Armstrong's 'Hay Fever' Robert Workman

EN The

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The Monday Interview



Deborah Ross
talks to

SHIRLEY BASSEY

Sharp as a diamond, and a diva forever



No pain, no gain. A tragic past is a diva's best friend

Frank Spooner Pictures

The great thing about Shirley Bassey is that when she gets up there in one of those spangled frocks with the slits that go right up the sides and opens that tremendous mouth of hers and goes "Goldfingaaaaaah!" or "Diamonds Are aaaaaaagh!" she does it with such force it's as if her life depends on it. Which it pretty much does.

Shirley, could you ever see yourselfacking it in? "Never!", she cries. "I would wither away. It's what keeps me live. It's what keeps me young." Shirley Bassey's now 60. And a granny, to boot. But somehow it doesn't matter that Shirley's 60 and a granny and still getting up there in those spangly, glamourous frocks with the slits up the side and, often, be necklines so low a good part of her bosom's hanging out. There is nothing vaguely grotesque or ghoulish or pathetic about it. It's a good bosom. It's Shirley. She loves doing it and we love her to do it. She believes in it so we believe in it. She may, now I think about it, be one of the last of The Great Stars. Oh, do you think so? she says, immensely pleased, and blinks a lot instantly, which takes something of a nice change. Today's so-called stars, they don't know how to do it, do they? They have one hit record and the world hails them as a star but they dress like tramps – like tramps! and they don't know how to relate to audiences or anything. Whereas you, I tell her, sing as if you really mean it. "I do!" she cries excitedly. I am saying all the right things, obviously. I think she may even be a bit in love with me by now. We meet at a hotel in London where she drives up in a chauffeur driven Daimler which doesn't have a "VIP" sticker in the windscreen because it has a "VIP" one. She is wearing, today, an Yves St Laurent jacket splashed with multi-coloured beads and a Donny Osmond-style cap. Her fingers glitter with diamonds which don't so much cluster on her rings as gather into untidy beaps. You would never find Shirley hanging on about glamour being a fluff, inconsequential thing. Shirley believes absolutely in things that sparkle and glitter. She can clearly remember her first great dress, which she bought when she was 15 or so and was working in a Cardiff enamelware factory. "It was tartan, with a big skirt that rustled. I wore it to the factory dance and was in heaven." There, something so old fashioned about Shirley she's almost noble.

Some people think Shirley's had quite a tragic life, all told, and in many ways she

has. Marriages have failed. Children have suffered. (Samantha, her middle child, was found dead at the foot of Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol in 1985 at the age of 21.) She's had her run-ins with drink, was even arrested for being drunk and disorderly once. She was a good friend of Dodi Al Fayed. "I couldn't believe it. I still can't believe it," she moans.

There's been a great deal of pain in her life. To be sure, but for someone like Shirley, it doesn't necessarily mean it's been a bad life. It may even have been a good life because it's been a star's life, and that's all she's ever wanted to be ever since one of her older sister's took her to a Billy Eckstein concert when she was very small and she saw the audience 'go ape' over him. Anyway, you don't get to be a true star – get to be a Judy Garland or an Elizabeth Taylor, say – unless, it seems to me, you suffer pain then get up there and do your stuff and show everyone how you can sur-

'Today's so-called stars, they don't know how to do it, do they? And they dress like tramps – like tramps!'

vive it. If you don't have the pain, then you're just the Nolan Sisters. Possibly, there was no way Shirley was ever not going to have a tragic life. But now, is there some happiness now? Yes, she says. She thinks there may be. These days she lives alone in Monte Carlo and rather likes it. Previously, she's always had lovers or husbands or both on the go and it's quite nice, she says, being on her own for a change. "I have no one to worry about apart from myself. I can eat what I want, go where I want, do what I want." She has never had much luck on the man front. Everything's always ended in tears or, in the case of her first husband, suicide. She says, now, "sometimes I hate love because it is so heartbreaking and destructive." Of course, it doesn't have to be, but you can see why it is with her.

She says she likes her men to be "real men". She went, last night, to see Mel Gibson in *Conspiracy Theory* but hated it – "I dozed off, to tell you the truth" – because Mel's character was very wet and you don't

go to the movies to see Mel being wet, do you? "You go to see him being whoa!" she says. "I hate wet men. Hate men who dither. Hate wimps. Rhett Butler. Now he's my kind of man." So you want to be carried off to the bedroom in a like-it-or-not sort of way? "Yes! Yes!" But then, later, she says she can't stand men who want to make decisions on her behalf. I think, as a woman, Shirley might be quite difficult to please.

Certainly, she is still very good-looking. And sexy, yes, although she isn't sexy in a feminine way. By this, I don't mean she is butch, just that there is nothing fragile or dainty or tender about her. She is all strong mouth, strong bones, strong body. She is sexy in a tough yet triumphant way. Gay men are mad for her, as are straight ones. My dad's been crazy about her for years. But dad, I say, she's a 60-year-old Welsh granny. "So," he says, "she still looks as if she'd be dangerous in bed." Yes, well, that's quite enough from you, father.

Shirley Veronica Bassey was the youngest of seven children born to Eliza, a Yorkshirewoman, and Henry Bassey, a Nigerian seaman who left home when Shirley was two and was never seen again. No, Shirley's never been tempted to track him down or find out more. "I never even asked my mother about him. I didn't want to carry that baggage through my life. I just let it go." She doesn't seem to have a very inquiring mind, or be a deep thinker. No, she doesn't read books. She tries sometimes, but can't concentrate sufficiently. "I can never get to the end. I've been trying to read *Liz Taylor's* life story. It's fascinating. But I know I'll never finish it." She doesn't know if her mother was ever happy or not because she never asked her. OK then, what was she like? "She was quite Victorian in many ways. She was a quiet, Northern woman with beautiful, very white skin who didn't give much away about herself and was a great cook. I remember her egg and bacon tarts. And her Yorkshire puddings. We also had a lot of offal because offal was cheap, but I hated that."

Shirley grew up in Tiger Bay, the docklands area of Cardiff before moving to Splott, an all-white area of Cardiff, when she was three and her mother remarried. I wonder, naturally, what it was like growing up as mixed race child in 1940s Britain, but she says if there was any racism, she never saw it. Possibly, she says, this was because everyone knew that if you called the Bassey children names "you'd get a punch in the nose." Tough as old boots, as I said. As the youngest of so many children,

Shirley never got a lot of time from anybody. She got under her mother's feet. Her older sisters were always scolding her for putting her dirty hands on their dresses or messing with their lipsticks. No, she never felt unwanted, but did feel "awkward and in the way".

Then, one evening, one of the sisters took Shirley to a Billy Eckstein concert at Cardiff's New Theatre. She doesn't know why this sister picked her out, but reckons "it must have been fate". She remembers not so much the concert, but going to the stage door afterwards with her sister and all the other autograph hunters and seeing Billy come out "and everyone going mad". As someone who had never been given much attention, this impressed her deeply. "I had never been interested in show business until that point. And then, a few days later, my brother came home with a Judy Garland record – *Somewhere Over The Rainbow*, I think – and that was

'I've always been the breadwinner and men don't like that. They turn on you. They bite the hand that feeds them.'

it." I tell her she may be the nearest thing to Judy Garland still going. She is very pleased. "You know, that's one of the most wonderful things anyone's ever said to me," she sighs happily. We may be getting married shortly. Shirley left school at 14 for the enamelware factory where it was her job to pack pots in brown paper for export. She loved it, actually. "The social life was very good. There was a club. I became quite good at archery. I had high-heels and lipstick." And boys? "There were quite a few, yes. Men have always liked me. When I was quite young, married men would be after me. I remember, once, me and my mother were walking down the road when this married man came out of a pub and said to my mother 'I love your daughter.' My mother said: 'Go away. Leave her alone.' I was so ashamed. 'But mum, I love him,' I kept crying." She has always fallen in love quite easily, she says. She always had a good voice, was always being asked to sing at family weddings, and while at the factory she sang in working

men's clubs in the evenings. She made her West End debut in a British revue called *Hot From Harlem* and had her first hit record with something very colonial called "The Banana Boat Song". She was a star by the time she was 20. And being a star was even better than working in the factory. And much better, as it turned out, than being married.

She's been married twice. First there was Kenneth Hume, a B-movie director who committed suicide after their divorce, and then there was Sergio Novak, an Italian producer. Both eventually became her managers, at her request, probably because she wanted to be controlled by them. But, of course, as the person bringing the money in, she was really the one in control. "I've always been the breadwinner and men don't like that. They turn on you. They bite the hand that feeds them. Eventually, too, they become very jealous of the love one has with an audience."

She's had three children, Sharon, Samantha and Mark. Sharon was born when Shirley was 17 and unmarried. She was raised by one of Shirley's sisters until she was seven. ("At 17, what could I have offered her?") Samantha threw herself from a bridge. Mark took drugs. She has castigated herself in print many times for being a bad mother. She was never there. Her children would weep to see her suitcases lined up in the hall yet again. Her work came before everything. In 1972, she gave an interview in which she described her life like this: "My work is a cycle of world tours. After our Christmas holidays in the Italian Alps skiing with the children, I will go to Australia for three weeks, then to Japan for two TV shows and two concerts. In March, I've a concert tour of America and in May I return for a tour of Britain..." Yes, of course she wishes she'd done things differently. But could she have? No, probably not. After Samantha died, she did try to retire. But a year later she was back. She couldn't hack it. She needs to perform. She needs audiences and applause. She loved her children, but probably not enough, because she's always loved being "a Star" first. This is sad in some ways, I guess, but, then again, it does make her Shirley Bassey, the woman who can still pack them in like no one else of her generation and who sings as if her life depends on it. Because it does.

Shirley's latest album, *The Birthday Concert*, is released today. A live recording of the concert she gave in July to celebrate her 60th birthday, it's out on Arful Records and costs £12.99 for the CD and £8.99 for the cassette.



Dinah Hall

Matters of the flesh

What to do with the cuddly toys? The girls undertook a census of them last week and discovered they had 73. Unfortunately they have given them all names, dates of birth and occupations so the conventional method of keeping numbers down – a midnight cull – is no longer possible. What was once an anonymous, lime-green mutant rabbit languishing at the bottom of the dirty clothes basket is now a shop assistant called Sally whose birthday must be celebrated tomorrow. Plan B was to persuade the children to take some to Kensington Palace as a tribute to Diana, something several hundred other parents have obviously thought of before me – but I could not live with the thought that some poor East European tourist might be sent to prison for three years for succumbing to the plastic, one-eyed gaze of a win-a-price-every-time teddy bear. On the other hand, maybe it's not such a bad idea to make adult possession of cuddly toys a criminal offence, particularly when combined with broderie anglaise heart-shaped cushions on the bed.

All those smug people who claim to only ever eat fish and white meat and regard your occasional longings for a juicy fillet steak as tantamount to feasting with the devil (or at least terribly unfashionable) will be murmuring "I told you so" over their grilled radicchio at the news of links between red meat and cancer. (Funny isn't it, though, how butchers always look so hale and ruddy while people who work in health shops are invariably pale and emaciated?) A rather more cheering piece of research emerged at the same time – apparently nearly half of all adult vegetarians are secret carnivores. What a cheek – you go to all that trouble of finding something tantalisingly meatless out of the *River Cafe Cookbook* to ponder to your guests' purist tastes and then you discover they go straight home and pig out on illicit bunks of flesh.

Good to see in the new women's magazine *Frank* that being hugely pregnant is fashionable again. Together with the news that having a baby over the age of 40 might increase my chances of becoming a lonely, wizened centenarian, the thought of lolling seductively around in fields, belly button protruding through a skimpy uterus-hugging Dolce e Gabbana is almost enough to make me try for number five. And this time, of course, I wouldn't insist on my husband being present at the birth (I will never forget the humiliation of him asking for a doggy bag as the placenta slipped out) as caring, sharing labour is now deeply uncool – "what, he moistened your lips with ice, oh God, how awfully 'Eighties'". My own primitive instincts favoured giving birth behind a bush in Battersea Park, but I think women will lose out if men are banished to the waiting room: who else will tell all your friends how wonderful you were?

My book club meeting was a livelier affair than usual this month. It was the annual husbands' event, though inexplicably only four out of 12 turned up: we had given them Blake Morrison's *When Did You Last See Your Father?* to read, mistakenly thinking it would give them the opportunity to enquire about their own filial relationships. To be fair, though, we women neglected our topic, *The Persian Pickle Club*, in favour of discussing testicles and the news that large ones denote promiscuous, unfaithful bastards. Possibly feeling rather ringfenced, the men adopted studiously neutral expressions and careful reactions, like "Gosh, isn't that interesting?" All the wives, naturally, claimed not to be in a position to be able to compare sizes (this is East Sheen, after all). In fact only I was confident enough to defend my absent husband's magnificent undercarriage: always one to buck the trend he is, I'm sure, completely monogamous. (And if you have any evidence to the contrary, all letters will be received in strictest confidence.) In any case, what sort of man would allow his testicles to be taken between calipers, even in the interest of scientific research? The whole thing is obviously complete bollocks.

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ISSUE ONE OUT NOW

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the leader page

Can Hague stop the rot of party dissent?

Last year, Hugh Dykes was a "lifelong Tory", as he denied speculation that he was about to follow Alan Howarth, Emma Nicholson and Peter Thurnham by defecting from the sinking ship. Today, his Tory life has ended and his Liberal Democrat one has begun. The Conservative Party will dismiss him as a known dissident and an ex-MP.

There is nothing so ex as an ex-MP, but Mr Dykes matters – possibly more than he can imagine. He matters partly because of the breathtaking irrelevance of the parliamentary Tory party, hidden in dusty corners of Westminster while Tony Blair's majority of 179 carries all before it. The importance of Tory politicians depends – for the moment – on what they have to say, rather than whether or not they sit on those green benches in SW1.

And Mr Dykes not only has important things to say, but says them on behalf of a large number of people who are still members of the Tory party. As he explains on the opposite page, he joined a Tory party that believed in constructive engagement with Europe. Now the party is in the grip of an "insulting, isolationist anti-Europeanism". He was an extreme, rebellious pro-European, but he was not a lone maverick. There are many who share his views on Europe at all levels of his former party, including its rump of MPs, and including former

Chancellor Kenneth Clarke.

What is interesting, however, is that Mr Dykes should have chosen to seek political asylum in Paddy Ashdown's party rather than in Mr Blair's. Whatever the disorienting effects of Blairism, and however much Mr Blair and Mr Dykes both talk of "One Nation", tribal feelings still run deep enough to keep them apart. Mr Dykes mentions only one policy which led him to prefer the Liberal Democrats to Labour: the pledge to raise taxes to pay for better schools and hospitals. Clearly, this makes sense to a local politician who fought bitterly against the closure of Edgware General Hospital. But it is striking that this is the only significant policy difference between the two parties.

So is the role of the Liberal Democrats now simply to act as a reception centre for defecting Tories who cannot quite bring themselves to go the whole hog? To pose the question is to begin to sketch out the wider significance of Mr Dykes's defection.

This week, the Liberal Democrats get their feet under, well, not the Cabinet table, but that of a Cabinet committee, and one chaired by the Prime Minister. This event will send further shocks through the post-earthquake landscape of British politics. It sends an important signal that Mr Blair is serious about the creative destruction of party political tribalism.

Nor is it a mere public relations sop: the committee will have real influence over vital questions for the future of British democracy. Most strikingly, the possibility of changing the electoral system for the House of Commons is wide open, with Mr Blair's own position evidently changeable.

This is not how most people thought of the "realignment of British politics" during the Tory years: everyone assumed that, if a proportional electoral system came, it would come as the price of Liberal Democrat support for a Labour government in a hung parliament. But Mr Blair has bigger

ideas, in which electoral reform is secondary to a much wider realignment upon which he can build a lasting, progressive government.

Mr Dykes's decision suggests that the ties of party loyalty are continuing to break, and that the process of realignment has barely started yet. It suggests that the Tories, far from waiting under a new young leader, remain in a fissiparous state. It suggests that Europe remains a divisive issue. And it will do nothing to calm the first mutterings against William Hague's leadership, as the opinion polls repeatedly return their cruel verdict. When the

Tory organisation in this country finally levels out of its tailspin and Sir Archie Norman applies the management techniques of Asda supermarkets to turn it into a modern, membership-based national party, whatever is left will be much smaller, ideologically, financially and in terms of membership numbers, than the dominant political force it once was.

In other words, the field is clear for Mr Blair: he is poised to achieve an ascendancy over our national life for which there are few precedents. It is quite different from Margaret Thatcher's strident pre-eminence because it is based on co-opting threats rather than fighting them. Mr Blair is more like the Prime Minister of a Government of National Unity. Always somewhat detached from his own party, he now appears to hover above all parties, capable of drawing from the best of each of them, as well as calling upon the talents of business leaders, trade unionists and showbiz stars. This is not coalition politics, or consensus politics. The right phrase is "coallescent politics", and Mr Ashdown seems to understand it well.

For some in Mr Blair's own party, it is all too much. But the real warning bells should be ringing in Conservative Central Office. This morning, Mr Hague and his spokespeople will condemn Mr Dykes as a petulant attention-seeker. They have to. It is

part of the rules of the game. But let us hope that, in private, they are giving serious thought to how broad or how narrow the Tory party is going to be. They are in danger of being corralled into an anti-European ghetto, cut off from the political mainstream. Monetary union is, as we report today, rolling onwards, and permanent abstention is not a sustainable policy. Mr Hague must recognise that a Conservative party that cannot attract its ranks people like Hugh Dykes will be marginalised for many, many years to come.

Something fishy about feminism

Some men had high hopes of feminism, hoping that they might be excused compulsory attendance at the birth of their children on the grounds that what women want is to be surrounded by the sisterhood, instead of useless and squeamish New Men. A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle, as the famous separatist slogan of the Seventies had it. But, nearly all men now feel bound to be there and, what is more, 60 per cent of women are glad of their moral support. Not long now, then, before we take to the streets with placards demanding 'More Underwater Cycle Lanes Now'.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Scottish lead for Wales to follow

Sir: The message of the Scottish referendum result to the people of Wales must be to look and learn from the experience of devolved government in other nations. We should learn from our successful European partners like Germany, where each *Land* enjoys considerable autonomy. We should consider successful devolved governments within the Commonwealth, such as the Australian model. Nor can anyone seriously claim that the American devolved system is a recipe for disunity and conflict.

Above all, let us consider Scotland. Five years from now, the Westminster parliament could again be dominated by right-wing dogmatists ready to inflict yet more damage on our social fabric. Scotland will have a permanent buffer against these attacks but, without an assembly, Wales will again be easy prey. We need to look at the self-confidence which other nations, both large and small, have demonstrated; then Wales must seize the moment and give a decisive "Yes" vote. TIMOTHY HUW DAVIES, Brighton, Sussex

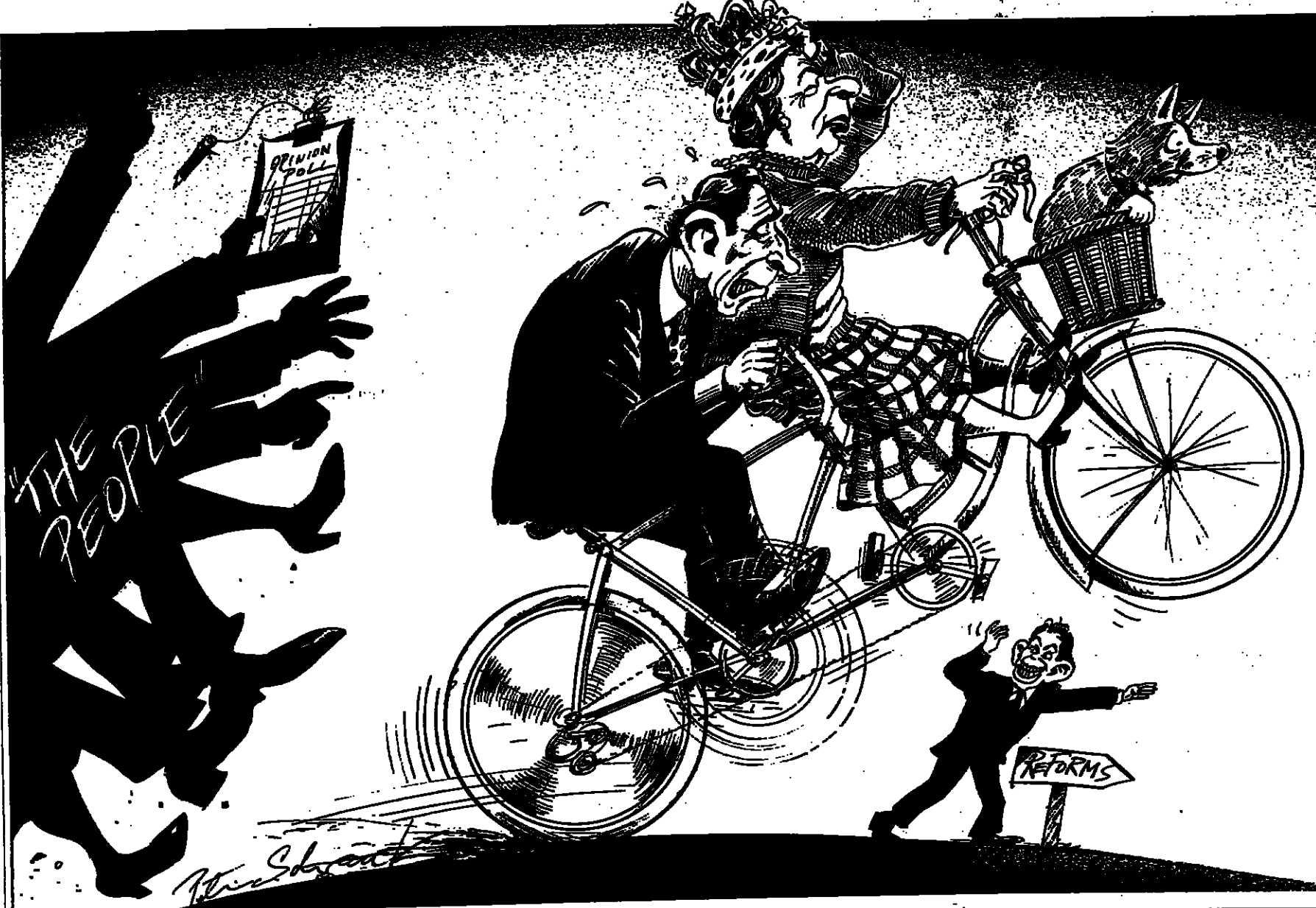
Sir: Even an ardent Unionist such as Margaret Thatcher once said that no English politician could gainsay the democratic will of the people of Scotland.

While it is therefore necessary to grant Scotland the freedom it seeks even if it leads to full independence, one must also consider the democratic needs of the English. I therefore propose the following three changes to come into effect on the first day of the Edinburgh parliament convenes. First, Scotland should have its representation at Westminster cut from 72 to 45 in line with its population size. Second, the Scottish members should only be allowed to vote on UK issues, not on matters affecting England. Third, the £14bn Scottish budget should be reduced by £2.5bn to bring it in line with expenditure in England. The Scots could then use their tax-varying powers to finance their own budget and no longer rely on the English taxpayer, via the UK Treasury, to support them. PAUL HARRISON, Welwyn, Herts

Sir: Reading about UK devolution while abroad can alter one's opinion. Seen from a German perspective, Tony Blair's "third way" (leading article, 13 September) between separatism and the status quo appears to make perfect sense. Separatism still makes no sense at all.

Like Scotland and Wales, Bavaria feels different from its neighbouring states. In spite of such differences, it is not separatist. It is content to remain absorbed into a federal system. Bavarians, like other Germans, do not wish to see their country fragmenting and reverting back to a collection of small independent states. They are aware of the price paid in unification and the advantages unity has brought. Furthermore, they realise size affects their influence and power, both internationally and within the European Union.

Scottish (and Welsh) separatism should learn from German pragmatism. SELWYN HODSON PRESSINGER, Munich, Germany



Struggling with basic skills

Sir: I am not surprised at the levels of illiteracy in over-45s ("One in five Britons fails literacy test", 12 September).

I left primary school in 1963. The school was in south London, with a mixed social intake, as it bordered working- and middle-class areas. Of the final year, approximately a quarter passed the 11+, and about a quarter were virtually illiterate. There were two main reasons for the high proportion of children scarcely able to read and write.

First, this was pre-Plowden, with a regimented system of teaching. Whole class rather than group work was the norm, although those who were expected to pass the 11+ were given extra coaching as a small group. Second, and I suspect much more important, none of my classes had fewer than 40 pupils. My elder sister went through primary school with classes sometimes in excess of 50. No wonder that with such large classes, many children who were struggling got totally lost.

In 1976, I met a teacher from my old school and as we talked she told me that for the first time she had succeeded in getting all her reception class children reading. When I asked her why that was, she simply said that for the first time the class size was below 20.

If the Government is serious in wanting to raise standards in basic skills, it could start by getting class sizes back to what they were in the 1970s.

RUTH SHARRATT, Director, Distance Learning Unit, University of Sheffield

Sir: Literacy and numeracy are vocational skills and no school leaver should be without them. The current law obliges children to attend school (or receive an appropriate education) until the age of 16. If they were also required to pass GCSE English and maths before leaving then the problem would be solved.

The attitude in schools that relatively trivial subjects – the sciences, history, foreign languages – are entitled to a specific proportion of the pupil's time, rather than a share of the remainder after maths and English, must disappear. If it does, innumeracy and illiteracy will go with it. EDMUND KEOHANE, London SW12

Sir: I read with amusement the various theories propounded as to why a decline in standards of literacy has taken place. In fact, the explanation requires neither national surveys nor scholarly research. In almost every home in Britain is a television. It is switched on when the first member of the family gets up in the morning, and switched off by the last one to go to bed.

The business of watching television accounts for the vast majority of most children's leisure time; indeed, for many it is their sole recreation. This being so, it does not require an educationist to deduce that, because they devote so little time to reading, they will not become proficient readers.

A HARDING, Stansted, Essex

Sir: If reading a bus timetable, filling in a form and following a recipe are indicators of literacy, then I know very many intelligent, well-educated people who could confidently claim to be illiterate. R J HEWELL, Bath

Safe haven for Turkish Cypriots

Sir: Turkey did not need any persuasion from Rauf Denktaş to intervene in Cyprus in July 1974 ("Keeper of the island fortress", 11 September), as she was legally and morally duty-bound to do so in order to stop the ethnic cleansing of Turkish Cypriots by the Greeks and the annexation of Cyprus to Greece. That intervention was effected under the international Treaty of Guarantee, which carries also the signature of the UK.

The history of the Cyprus problem is riddled with Greek intransigence, as in 1986 when the Greek Cypriot leader refused point blank to sign an agreement under UN auspices that would have settled the Cyprus issue. The Greeks repeated their intransigence, under Glafos Clerides, when they refused to accept UN confidence-building measures, quite recently.

Mr Denktaş sincerely and honestly supports all genuine, fair and mutually acceptable efforts to solve the Cyprus problem. But any attempts to place the Turkish

Cypriots under Greek domination, which they suffered for almost a century, are naturally repugnant to them.

North Cyprus may be a "statelike" and a "little territory", but at least the Turkish Cypriots feel safe in this haven, away from the enmeshment, turmoil and ethnic cleansing to which they have been periodically subjected by the Greeks. HAKKI MUFTUOZADE, London Representative, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, London WC1

High art in landscape design

Sir: Parts of our landscape are works of high art, including many of our urban parks (report, 4 September; letter, 11 September). For instance, the carefully designed Royal Parks of central London made their contribution to the emotional force of the Princess of Wales's funeral procession. The cortege, following William III's route from Kensington Palace to Whitehall, passed successfully along landscapes composed by Bridgeman (c1736-37), Decimus Burton (1823-29), Sir Aston Webb (1905), Mollart (1660), John Nash (1827) and finally to Whitehall through William Kent's Horse Guards arch (1740).

The Lottery's contribution to the creation and conservation of fine landscapes deserves acknowledgement, for support is

being given to several examples of the art of landscape design. However, landscape is an area which particularly highlights a weakness in the Lottery's terms of reference. Support for the upkeep of worthwhile creations and activities is not eligible for grant. Because the art of landscape design is concerned with human creativity through the agency of the living surface of the planet, finance for continuing upkeep is as important to quality as imaginative opening initiatives. HAL MOGGIDGE, Chairman, The Landscape Foundation, London EC1

A fair share of Diana's fund

Sir: Do donors to Princess Diana's Memorial Fund expect the money to go to unlikely bodies simply because she supported them recently, at the expense of those true humanitarian concerns with which Diana was clearly in sympathy?

A fairer way forward would be for all charities to be allowed the opportunity to gain funding on the merits of their work and proposals. Opening the fund up in this way should involve a proper administration somewhat like that already established – with much time and cost – by bodies such as the National Lottery Charities Board. If the NLCS were used, then more of Diana's fund would reach those she would have wished it to, rather than being spent on duplicating existing systems. EDWARD PARRY, Director, Relief Fund for Romania, London W1

Building a safe cycle network

Sir: K Haggett misses a vital point when he complains (Letters, 13 September) about the Sustrans National Cycle Network – it is not actually finished yet. When it is, there will be a great many urban traffic-free links onto the Network proper and this will encourage waverers to at last get on their bikes.

Far from being simply a leisure route provider, Sustrans is gradually piecing together a 6,500-mile network of cycle routes that will radiate throughout the country, via urban areas as well as through the countryside. Just 1,400 have been mapped and waymarked so far. The rest will be added over the next seven years.

Enthusiast cyclists are happy to mix with motorised traffic and forget that non-enthusiasts don't want to be anywhere near cars, lorries and buses. Many thousands of new cyclists will be created when Sustrans and their local authority partners lay down the kind of segregated cycle routes – through car-free city centres, for instance – common on the Continent. This is not ghettoisation, it is a realisation that cycle use will not grow unless truly safe routes for cyclists are provided.

The National Cycle Network is the showpiece project of the Millennium Commission and those who want to see money diverted elsewhere are swimming against the tide. CARLTON REID, Editor, On Your Bike: the family cycling magazine, Newcastle Upon Tyne

Sir: Trains to Chestow, for the Forest of Dean, will only take two bicycles each (Letters, 11 September). Congratulations, then, to the Wye Valley Wanderer bus service, which will take up to five bikes on each bus, free of charge. The service connects Worcester, Hereford, Ross-on-Wye and Monmouth. GITA RAE, Cycle Liaison Group, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Teddington, Middlesex

Thank you for coming out

Sir: Can I say thank you to the MP Angela Eagle who has come out as the first lesbian MP (report, 11 September)?

Many, myself included, who have risked dismissal from our employment by being honest about our sexuality, have long been looking for someone willing to admit that the person they go home to in the evening has no reflection on how they deal with their constituents' problems or difficulties that day, whatever their job.

Let's hope that many more people will be able to live their lives to the full not worrying about gossip – be it from the press or workmates, family or neighbours – and that society will learn to value people for themselves and for what they can do for others. KAREN TAYLOR, Coniston, Cumbria

Sir: Where does the coming out of a lesbian of Angela Eagle, whose twin sister is heterosexual, leave the argument for gay predisposition to homosexuality? ALAN TAYLOR, Foston, Lincolnshire

مكتبة الانجلى

Why this was the moment to defect

by Hugh Dykes

I have been a member of the Conservative Party for 37 years, and served as Conservative MP for Harrow East for 27 years until this May. This week I have finally decided to leave the party, and to join Paddy Ashdown's Liberal Democrats. My decision is by no means a sudden impulse. It is the sad conclusion of a long period of soul-searching – the inevitable result of the Conservative Party's steady drift away from the principles and policies which I hold dear and which attracted me to the party all those years ago.

I have always been a "One Nation" Conservative, believing in social justice, committed to the European ideal, and a supporter of the sensible modernisation of our political system. On all these issues it is not so much a case of

me leaving the Conservative Party, but of the party leaving me. It is good fortune for Britain that in the Liberal Democrats we have a party that has stood firm on what really matters to our future. I believe Paddy Ashdown is an extremely impressive leader, and I am proud to become the party's newest member today.

I have had growing concerns about the direction the Conservative Party has taken in recent years – doubts which I tried to stifle as the election approached. The row in January with my local executive – when its members blocked my attempt to participate with Labour and the Liberal Democrats in a review of constitutional issues – left a nasty taste in my mouth.

Inside, I felt uneasy about the rightward drift of social policy, about the growing divisions in our society and about the increasingly harsh tone of government pronouncements. I felt bitter about the closure of Edgware General Hospital, and about the impact of the loss of such front-line NHS services on the people I was in Parliament

to serve. I felt that the Conservative Party ought to have been prepared to engage in a more rational debate about the modernisation of our constitution. I despaired at the party's drift into an insular, isolationist anti-Europeanism that has only damaged Britain's interests and undermined our influence abroad. All these matters were important but, in so many ways, Europe was the deciding issue which obliged me to take this difficult decision.

The Conservative Party I joined was one that understood that Britain's place was at the heart of Europe, shaping Europe's future. The Conservatives in those days understood, in particular, that the best interests of British business lay in a positive and constructive pro-Europeanism. I rejoiced when Ted Heath's government joined the then European Economic Community in 1972.

The importance of Europe to the UK is as great today as it ever was. I want to be a member of a party which sees Britain's future firmly at the centre of Europe – a full partner in building a more integrated, more prosperous and more secure continent as we enter the next century. Unfortunately, the Conservative Party has given up that vision. It no longer speaks up for the interests of British business in the European debate.

The conduct of the Conservative election campaign filled me with gloom. I am not surprised that I and other MPs lost our seats, particularly when I recall the sorry progress of the cash-for-questions affair, and the chaos and confusion of our European policy as the anti-Europeans came to dictate the party's policy.

Even after the disaster on 1 May, I thought it would be worth one last stand to save the party, to which I have dedicated my political life, from the inexorable drift to the right (when Central Office raised the issue, I considered trying to get the nomination for the Uxbridge by-election). But the final nail in the coffin of my hopes was Ken Clarke's defeat at the hands of William Hague. I realised then that the battle for the soul of the Conservative Party was lost, finally and conclusively.

Many of my erstwhile colleagues, sick at heart as I am, are still agonising. Others have decided to remain, however unhappily, in the party to which they have always belonged. I respect their decision, but after long thought I decided I had to act. I feel

what I have done represents the views of hundreds of thousands of former Tories.

After talking things through with Richard Hohns, who masterminded the Lib-Dem election campaign, I met and talked to Paddy Ashdown direct, just before Parliament went into recess. In France over the summer we met again, and talked about the state of British politics, about the Conservative Party, about Europe. We discussed a wide range of policy issues, and agreed on much.

I have always been a liberal Conservative, valuing tolerance, decency and fairness. These "One Nation" values were once very strong in the Conservative Party. But I believe the party gradually lost touch with these traditional British values, on which its broad appeal had always been built. As I considered my political future, and read through the Liberal Democrat election

manifesto, I was struck by the way these values ran through the text and the policies – decency, a sense of fair play, and a basic tolerance. I was also impressed by the straightforwardness of their message on the issue of tax – that if you want better schools and hospitals, you have to be prepared to pay for them. I saw not only a party I could respect but also a party I could feel at home in.

I was impressed, too, by the decision of the Liberal Democrat and Labour parties to sit down and talk about the implementation of constitutional reform, even before the election, and to invite me as a Tory MP to join in this exercise before the election, and I would have liked the Conservatives to have made a more positive contribution to the constitutional debate, as the party did back in the 1960s and 1970s. As we enter a new century, I believe there are a number of important reforms needed to our constitutional arrangements.

The Gang of One: Tory MP Hugh Dykes early in his political career donned a Chairman Mao uniform to enter the House of Commons to hear the 1974 Budget

The wider the consensus these reforms can command, the more stable they are likely to be. That has been shown in Scotland over recent years, and I hope it will be shown again as plans to give London its own strategic voice are developed in the months ahead. I see the joint Cabinet Committee on the Constitution as a sensible means of developing a consensus around reform, and a welcome expression of a less tribal style of politics.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I see in the Liberal Democrats kindred spirits on the key issue of Europe. The European commitment of the Liberal Democrats, and of the Liberals and SDP before them, has been unwavering. Like me, they see Britain's future firmly at the heart of Europe. They argue the pro-European

I saw a party I could respect and feel at home in

case as a matter of principle. They understand why greater sharing of power, at a European level, is actually in Britain's interest, and have been unwavering advocates of the positive case for Britain joining a single European currency. At their conference in Eastbourne next week, in a debate in which I hope to be called to speak, they will set out a positive agenda for Europe after the Amsterdam summit, moving the debate forward instead of letting it stagnate.

At the end of our long discussions, Paddy invited me to join the party, and I accepted with pleasure. I don't feel I have left my home. I feel I have come home. The Conservative Party has changed, beyond recognition. British politics is changing, too. I am delighted that I am now with people whose views are closer to mine than the views of many I shared the Commons benches with in the last Parliament. It will be marvellous to be at the Liberal Democrat conference in Eastbourne next week, speaking up for what I believe, instead of apologising for what I abhor.

A web of international like and dislike

Greg Rusedski was luckier than the people of Scotland. He was allowed to choose which nationality he adhered to without all the political parties shouting over his shoulder and telling him what to put down on the paper. Considering that the devolution vote was a matter of leaving it to the people to choose, you got the feeling that the parties were not, in fact, happy to leave it to the people at all but insisted on turning it into another party political thing.



Miles Kingston

Rusedski had an easier time of it, even though he had a harder choice. He had grown up in Canada of a Ukrainian father and English mother, so he must have felt part Canadian, part Ukrainian and part English.

This is a position I could not have begun to appreciate had I not met a Ukrainian Canadian earlier this summer. My wife and I were staying in Vermont at this small hotel called the Inn at Craftsbury Common, which not only cooked extraordinarily good food but had an extraordinary dining policy. It made everyone sit at the same table and talk to each other.

This meant that instead of doing what we usually do, which is to spend the whole meal wishing we knew who the people at the other tables were and what they were like, we spent the whole meal wishing the people at our elbow were at another table and that we didn't know quite so much about them...

No, it's not true, actually. We met far more interesting and nice people than the other sort, and one of them was a charming young Canadian dentist who was called Len, which I suspect is a diminutive of his original Ukrainian name, because although he had no trace of any other accent but Canadian, he said that he spoke Ukrainian fluently. "I was born in Canada but I never spoke anything but Ukrainian and Russian in the home. My parents and I can all speak English, but it still feels very odd when I talk to them in English."

I asked him if he had ever been to the Ukraine.

"Yes, I went for a trip after the fall of Communism. It was quite strange going abroad to a country where you spoke the language fluently. It was like having a secret power which I used straight away. A guy

at the station thought I was American and offered me a taxi ride for \$10, in bad English. I told him in the best Ukrainian that he must be effing joking, and he was so surprised that I beat him down to 10 cents!"

At this point a French-Canadian at the other end of the table, who turned out to be an orthodontist from Montreal, cut into the conversation to talk about teeth, but I hauled him back from this after a while to get some advice on the speaking of French in Canada. Was it spoken with a Canadian accent? A French accent? "Normally, neither," he said.

"There are so many different accents even in Canada. Look, you say something in French and I'll show you."

"Je vous salue de Montreal a Toronto," I said.

"Now, if you were a working man in Quebec, you'd pronounce that this way," he said, and demonstrated unintelligibly, and then went round half a dozen guttural accents, all of which sounded like incredibly provincial French. In fact, when I got to Montreal a few days later I found that many people had pretty good French accents as well, but the orthodontist, although French-Canadian, was not pro-French. "The French? You can keep them," he said. "They come over here to Canada and strut around as if they still owned the place and as if we were a bunch of colonialists. God knows why they look down on us – we've had to come over the Atlantic in two world wars to rescue the French and have we ever heard a word of thanks from them? Never!"

Yes, the web of international like and dislike is bigger than we think, as this enlightening conversation suggests. More of it tomorrow...

The battle of incinerators vs recyclers

There it was on the doorstep last week, a big green plastic box with a leaflet in it. Recycling has at long last arrived in Lambeth. Having lived for more than 20 years in this (until recently) worst governed borough ever, I snorted with disbelief. The leaflet (printed on recycled paper) asked for newspapers, cans, bottles, old clothes, old shoes and engine oil. (Engine oil?) Put out the box and it will be taken away, sorted and recycled. Oh yeah?

I'd read all the stories – how some authorities were caught dumping their collected paper because it was cheaper than recycling. Only last week a report said that bottle and paper banks were ecologically unsound, using more energy in Volvo journeys than was saved by recycling. Recycling is often mocked as a silly middle-class habit, giving us eco-feel-good value for minimal personal sacrifice, but pretty useless.

Not so. It turns out, on digging into all this, that recycling is about to become, or at least could become, very profitable indeed. But it needs the government to take the right action – and soon.

A battle is currently being waged between the incinerators and the recyclers – both claiming the ecological high ground. Recyclers claim there is a huge, voracious and growing market, especially for old paper, making it possible to turn waste into profit. It saves forests, energy and will save millions on waste disposal.

On the other hand, incinerators are being heavily promoted by the DTI, claiming that the electricity they generate from burning waste creates a sustainable energy supply. With incineration the cost of disposal remains constant, making boroughs' budgets

easy to set, whereas recycling costs vary according to the rise and fall in the market for used paper, glass or aluminium. Prompted by the DTI, there is a sudden rush to build incinerators everywhere – four in Essex, several in Hampshire, five in Manchester and scores more – against fierce opposition from local residents.

This is happening just as the world is turning against incineration, on global warming and health grounds. Gordon Brown's threat to double the land-fill tax to stop more land being destroyed by poisonous waste means the councils are rushing to take out incineration contracts. But Japan and the US are now alarmed by serious health dangers from burning plastics, giving off cancer-causing dioxins. Whatever the claimed excellence of modern chimneys, incinerators may soon become as feared as nuclear power stations. The ash from them is especially hazardous. To deter burning, the EU may soon tax incinerators heavily, just as many councils move over to them.

I watched as a new odd-shaped green wagon came to collect the green boxes and the contents were sorted on the spot into various compartments. It didn't look economic. But it could be. The average council spends £25 a ton collecting and £25 a ton for disposal. Recycling makes collection more expensive, bringing the total price up to about £100, but once up and running, some of the pilot schemes are now getting about £27 a ton back for the material they've sold. (Incineration only earns £15 a ton back in energy generated.) But the potential value of recycled material is far more – enough to eventually make waste disposal free, or even profitable as it is in Canada – if only there were a free and fair market.



Polly Toynbee

Is recycling a silly middle-class habit, giving us eco-feelgood for minimal personal sacrifice?

As it is, a small group of paper remanufacturers, one single aluminium maker, and just two price-fixing glass makers drive down the prices, although they desperately want more material. In their greed to pay the lowest possible prices in the short term, they are throttling recycling schemes at birth, limiting the source

of materials they need in the long term.

Paper is the biggest potential money-spinner. We import 60 per cent of pulp for paper now, yet London alone throws away the equivalent growth of a forest its own size every year. The pathetic 6 per cent of waste Britain currently recycles already saves £1bn a year in imports. Using recycled paper for newsprint is 35 per cent cheaper than using new wood pulp, so the manufacturers certainly want it. One key paper maker is considering setting up a vast new recycled paper mill, but is hesitating in the face of many councils' plans to incinerate instead of recycling. Cities are the new forests, but we are about to burn the paper trees instead of using them.

This is all a very odd business. Why doesn't the law of supply and demand operate here? Why is there no future market in recycled materials? Because of the cartels, which the Office of Fair Trading is investigating. The cartels are aided by a weird system whereby the government demands that supermarkets provide certificates showing they have recycled 25 per cent of their packaging. Because they can't be bothered to hit these targets, all the supermarket chains buy certificates which state that the requisite amount of recycling has been done – by someone. These certificates are available from a single outfit consisting of all the recycling companies. This, oddly, is legal. And it means everyone has an interest in keeping the price of recycled material as low as possible.

Last year a new organisation called London Pride Waste Action Programme, put together by economist Professor Robin Murray, started up pioneering pilot schemes to show how

cost effective recycling can be. But councils are still hesitant. In London only 1 million out of 2.8 million households get any recycling. The start-up costs are steep and a single contract with an incinerator seems easier to the lazy and unimaginative.

However, politically, recycling has turned out to be amazingly popular. People really like it. And it is not just a middle-class fad. One Hackney pilot in a down-trodden high-rise estate got a phenomenal 60 per cent participation from residents. It was a rubbish-strewn estate where chutes were permanently jammed so mounds of the stuff were tossed over balconies – clearing it away was costing £350 a ton. Recycling in such places pays even higher dividends in savings on cleaning-up bills.

The last government set a target of 25 per cent recycling by 2000, but did little to make it happen. However, if we reached that target, waste disposal bills would drop by 17 per cent, while creating large numbers of jobs in collection and paper and glass manufacturing.

But it needs the government to step in now and break this log jam. Gordon Brown needs to get the manufacturers round his famous breakfast table together with the local authorities. He needs them to agree fixed long-term prices, to persuade the authorities to invest heavily now in recycling. The OFT needs to break the manufacturers' cartels. More laws demanding the use of recycled paper would bring more manufacturers in to break the stranglehold of the present few. Otherwise, threatened with higher land-fill taxes, local authorities will go ahead and rush for incineration. I, at least, have no further doubts about the value of recycling.

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obituaries / gazette



One of Greeves's fantastic ruined landscapes made with Victorian architecture

Stig Anderson

In the music business, the pop entrepreneur is a much maligned creature, often seen either as a swagman pulling the strings or a financial wizard investing money on his charges' behalf. Then there are the true visionaries who actually see something in artists and help them realise their vision, even beyond their wildest dreams. The impresario Stig Anderson was the perfect embodiment of all these tendencies.

He was the driving force behind Abba, the Swedish/Scandinavian (one member, Frida, is Norwegian) pop group who dominated the charts through much of the Seventies. His business acumen and occasional lyrical contributions helped turn the 1974 Eurovision winners into a worldwide phenomenon and a record-breaking act, scoring nine No 1 singles, eight No 1 albums, and 18 consecutive Top Ten singles in the British charts.

Born in 1931 in Hova, a small town 200 miles south-west of Stockholm, Stigkän Anderson had once nursed ambitions to be a pop star himself. After leaving school at 13, he went to night classes and became a primary school teacher. But, bitten by the rock 'n' roll bug, he also appeared as Stig Anderson & His Mashed Creampuffs.

However, his real forte was lyric-writing, often in hapazard, simplistic English. He wrote his first song at 16 for a girl who had refused to dance with him and embarrassed her by performing it in public.

Of the 2,000 songs he claims to have penned, the most memorable are the hilarious "The Girls Who Know Are Found In The Country and Rockin' Billy", a 1960 hit for Lill-Babs in Scandinavia and Holland. He used his royalties wisely to finish his schooling and graduated from the National Training College of Teachers in Stockholm.

Having had his first taste of international success, Anderson set up the pompously named Sweden Music company to publish his songs. Three years later, he joined forces with Bengt Bernhag, an imaginative promotion man and studio engineer, to form Polar Music. They discovered the West Bay Singers, featuring one Björn Ulvæus, at a Swedish Radio competition. Wanting to cash in on the popularity of skiffle and folk music, they renamed the band the Hootenanny Singers and had them cut a Swedish version of Tom Jones's "Green Green Grass Of Home".

By 1966, Ulvæus was keen to strike on his own. He met Benny Andersson who played keyboards with the Hep Stars, then almost as famous in their homeland as the Beatles. When both their groups floundered in 1969, Stig asked the duo to write songs for his other acts and also their own album. Together, the three composed the jolly "Lycka" ("Happiness") and, on the subsequent long-player of the same name included a track called "Hej Gamle Man" ("Hey, Old Man"). This was the first time Benny Andersson, Anni-Frid Lyngstad (known as Frida), Björn Ulvæus and Agnetha Fältskog appeared together on record. By then, they'd become two couples but still pursued separate musical careers.

Following the suicide of his partner Bernhag after years of health problems, Anderson wanted Ulvæus to join him in the Polar organisation but Ulvæus held out for his friend

Benny Andersson to become a partner too.

Anderson was determined to come up with a winning entry for the Eurovision Song Contest. In 1972, "Better To Have Loved", the writers' first attempt, for the Swedish singer Lena Andersson, came third. The following year, having had a couple of hits with "People Need Love" and "He Is Your Brother", Björn, Benny, Agnetha & Anni-Frid thought they were on to a winner with "Ring Ring" but they lost. Complaints flooded in and it was decided that in 1974, the Swedish entry would be decided by a phone-in.

On Anderson's advice, the quartet shortened their name to Abba, using the initials of their first names (they also had to ask the permission of the largest fish-canning factory in Sweden which shared the same name). They couldn't decide whether to enter "Fasta Manana" or "Waterloo" but plumped for the latter because, according to Ulvæus, "it was more fun to perform". Once again, it was Stig Anderson who had set things in motion and suggested the name Waterloo.

This time, Abba were duly selected to represent Sweden, worked on the choreography, the look, and convinced Sven-Olof Waldooff, the orchestra's conductor, to wear a Napoleonic hat. On 6 April 1974, in Brighton, they trounced all comers (including Olivia Newton John's "Long Live Love") and victory was theirs.

The rest is music history. Abba's heady blend of catchy melodies and sexual chemistry proved irresistible. With Anderson providing lyrical input and a global vision, the group overcame

the one-hit wonder curse which so often afflicts Eurovision winners. Their singalong, bouncy yet easy-on-the-ear singles, dominated the charts from 1975 to 1982. "SOS", "Mamma Mia", "Fernando", "Dancing Queen", "Knowing Me, Knowing You", "The Name Of The Game", "Summer Night City" blared out of every juke-box.

Abba got bigger, pioneered pop videos, launched a thousand parodies, toured the world. *Abba The Movie*, released in 1978, even showed Anderson playing himself (he also co-produced the film with Reg Grundy, the Australian who later launched *Neighbours*). He was enjoying every minute, cutting deals and looking after what had become the second most profitable corporation in Sweden, with average profits of £5m a year in the late Seventies – not far behind Volvo.

After the film, Anderson had less time to contribute lyrics but remained a sounding-board for Ulvæus and Andersson who assumed full creative control on later classics like "Angel Eyes", "I Have A Dream", "The Winner Takes It All", "Super Trouper" and "One Of Us". By then, the three were documenting the break-up of both their relationships in songs.

Ninety-eighty-one saw the group pay respect to their mentor on his fiftieth birthday with a limited edition 12in single pressed on red vinyl (200 copies) entitled "Salute To Stig". But behind the scenes, matters were coming to a head. Anderson had set up various companies to help reduce Abba's tax burden. The four members had always refused to become tax-exiles and were paying Sweden's highest rate tax – 85 per cent. Anderson was also selling Abba

records behind the Iron Curtain. Payment was often in kind, and soon, through Pol Oll, he was dealing in oil as well as records. Following a sudden drop in the average price of a barrel, the whole house of cards collapsed and an investigation into Abba's affairs was launched.

Apart from Frida who had sold all her shares in 1982, the rest of the band very nearly went to jail and had to settle out of court with their inland Revenue. Anderson became *persona non grata* with his former protégés who, justifiably, held him responsible for the whole fiasco, and sued him for unpaid royalties. It was a messy end to one of the greatest music busi-

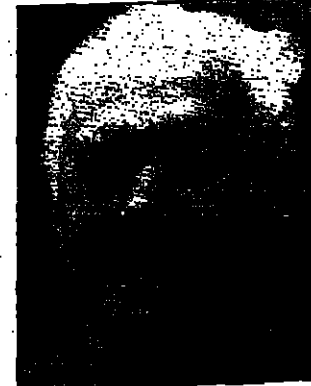
ness partnerships of all time. However, by the late Eighties, the nostalgia cycle had spun so fast that everybody from Elvis Costello to U2 via Erasure and the Lemonheads was performing Abba songs. The Australian "tribute" band Björn Again were also doing fine business on the college and cabaret circuit. To maximise income for Polar Music, Stig Anderson had always set up separate deals with various record companies in different countries (including a surprising early deal with Hugh Hefner's Playboy records in the US). In late 1989, he decided to cash in his chips and sell off the whole company to Polygram for an

undisclosed amount. The way was thus cleared for a host of lucrative compilations (*Abba Gold*, 1992, has to date sold over 11 million copies), a lavish box-set (*Thank You For The Music*, 1994) and the reissue of the whole catalogue.

In 1989 Anderson set up the Polar Music Prize, given through the Royal Swedish Academy of Music to one pop and one classical musician every year. Dizzy Gillespie, Paul McCartney, Bruce Springsteen have thus been honoured alongside the Polish composer Witold Lutoski and the choir director Eric Ericson.

Two years ago, the pop producer Tony Calder and Rolling

T. A. Greeves



Greeves: avuncular

The buildings in Greeves's drawings look real and this was because he was a trained architect. His love of architecture began at school at Radley, but his time at the Cambridge School of Architecture was interrupted by the Second World War and he joined the Royal Engineers. Most fortunately, he was attached to the Indian Army and so encountered not only rock-cut temples but Gilbert Scott's exotic Gothic buildings for the University of Bombay – a clear source of inspiration later. Returning home, Greeves completed his training at the Architectural Association in London where he met his future wife.

But his heart was not in the practice of architecture and he never set up on his own; he worked instead for a succession of practices, like Lanchester & Lodge, Cachinille-Day, and Felix Goldsmith. He always preferred to draw.

In 1951, his entertainingly eclectic and accomplished design for "A Monument to Commemorate the Passing of the Good Old Days of Architecture" was awarded first prize in a competition organised by the Architects' Benevolent Society: the assessors were H.S. Goodhart-Rendel, John Summerson, Osbert Lancaster and Rowland Emmet.

However the first drawings to be published showed not architecture but fantastic technology. "Greeves Flying Machines" – inspired by early-19th-century attempts to conquer the air – were included in the *Saturday Book* no

26 in 1966. They were so popular that the next issue carried a double-page colour spread of "A Steam Palace" – a colossal, preposterous Gothic juggernaut.

The mid and early-Victorian remained Greeves's favourite period, which was odd as he actually lived in a late-Victorian house by Maurice B. Adams in Bedford Park, the "Queen Anne" ideal artistic suburb in West London which he did much to save from further destruction.

When Tom and Eleanor moved to Newton Road, few took the eclectic buildings by Norman Shaw and others seriously, so Tom founded the Bedford Park Society, a model local pressure group which now guards the amenities of the area ferociously while the architectural delights of the suburbs are celebrated in the tiles, mugs and other ceramics made by Eleanor Greeves.

In recent years, the kindly, avuncular Tom Greeves be-

came the Grand Old Man of Bedford Park, never tiring of explaining its virtues while holding court in Norman Shaw's "fabard". That the Victorian Society now has its headquarters in Bedford Park is, in its way, a tribute to him.

Greeves was also a sensitive pianist, having a special interest from his late school days onwards in early keyboard instruments, and served as a committee member of the Galpin Society for many years. Another love was 17th- and 18th-century verse, especially Milton and Pope, pages of which he had committed to memory. He used to say that this might one day stand him in good stead for a rainy day, which it certainly did in his last illness.

Until comparatively recently, Greeves's drawings were known only to friends and stalwarts of the "Vic Soc", but two exhibitions of his work were organised by Robin Garton – in 1978 and 1987 – and in 1994 Andrew Best organised a splendid celebration in the beautiful limited-edition book illustrating his work, appropriately entitled *Ruined Chimes of the Imagination*.

Tom Greeves's imagination was truly original and his fantasy drawings were a significant part of the curious story of the rediscovery of Victorian architecture.

Garin Stamp

Thomas Affleck Greeves, architect and illustrator: born London 4 June 1917; married 1950 Eleanor Pryce; died London 31 August 1997.



The driving force behind Abba: Anderson, third from left, with (from left) Björn Ulvæus, Agnetha Fältskog, Frida Lyngstad, Benny Andersson and their conductor Sven-Olof Waldooff, after Abba had won the Eurovision Song Contest with "Waterloo" in 1974

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Two years ago, the pop producer Tony Calder and Rolling

Stones impresario Andrew Oldham collaborated with Anderson on *Abba, The Name of the Game*, a book which documents some of the goings-on behind one of pop's major success stories. In 1976, when asked the secret of his and Abba's success, Stig Anderson gave a simple reply: "Always work very hard. Do your best. Don't forget anything. And don't take life too seriously."

Pierre Ferrone

Stikkan ("Stig") Anderson, lyric writer, music publisher and manager: born Hova, Sweden 25 January 1931; married (two sons, one daughter); died 12 September 1997.

Professor John Knowelden



Knowelden: public health

In 1960 John Knowelden was appointed to the Chair of Preventive Medicine and Public Health (later Community Medicine) in Sheffield University, a position he held for over 30 years. He was joint editor of the *British Journal of Preventive and Social Medicine* from 1959 until 1969 and for a further three-year stint from 1973; and was co-author (with Ian Taylor) of the standard textbook *The Principles of Epidemiology* (1964).

It was at Sheffield that he made major contributions in training in public health medicine, not only in the university but nationally, for in 1977 he was appointed Academic Registrar of the Faculty of Community Medicine. In this post he was responsible for the development of training and examinations for the young faculty, enabling those wishing to make public health a career to achieve the high stan-

dards required for the specialty. He held this post until just before his retirement in 1984. Knowelden was educated at Colfe's Grammar School in Lewistown, obtaining his medical training at St George's Hospital Medical School and qualifying in 1942. Called up to the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve the same year, he served as a Surgeon Lieutenant in a Q-Class destroyer. His naval experience was later of great value when in 1977 he was appointed Civil Consultant in Community Medicine to the Royal Navy.

On demobilisation, he attended the Diploma in Public Health (DPH) course at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. It was reported that he had achieved the highest ever marks in the intelligence test to which all DPH students at that time were sub-

jected. He was then awarded a Rockefeller Fellowship in Preventive Medicine, enabling him to study in the United States, at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, in Baltimore.

On returning to Britain, in 1949 he was appointed lecturer in the Department of Med-

ical Statistics and Epidemiology and a member of the Medical Research Council's Special Research Unit at the London School of Hygiene under Professor Austin Bradford Hill. This relationship developed into a lifelong friendship and encouraged Knowelden to develop into one of the steady and most productive epidemiologists of his day.

As with his teaching, so it was with his research work: meticulous, careful, modest, but producing work widely recognised as of great importance. Much of his early work was concerned with the measurement of the efficacy of vaccination against whooping cough, of the efficacy of treatment of rheumatic fever, then of greater importance than it is today, and of the use of antibiotics in the treatment of pneumonia and other respiratory conditions.

In 1966, during his time at Sheffield, he established one of the first Medical Care Research Units funded by the Department of Health to investigate aspects of cost-effectiveness of service (rather than strictly clinical) aspects of innovation. His first study in this field was an inves-

tigation of the effectiveness and acceptability of early discharge after hernia repair. Another study undertaken in Sheffield was a large study of infant death syndrome (IDS), which established the syndrome's various underlying factors more clearly.

He also played a major role as member or secretary of many Medical Research Council and Health Department committees, underlining his abilities as an organiser of great skill with enormous ability to elicit co-operation from the often numerous bodies and individuals involved in data collection.

After his retirement from full-time work in 1984, he became coordinator of academic training for Trent Regional Health Authority. Knowelden had been appointed a JP in 1962 and for many years served as a magistrate in Sheffield's Chil-

dren's Court; he later assisted in hearing appeals from magistrates' courts in the area. He was also an accomplished musician and was a great lover of chamber music and opera.

He faced his final illness with great courage. It was typical of him that shortly before

his death, and in great pain, he visited my family in Scotland. Having a pre-dinner drink we felt that "good health" was an inappropriate toast. Without hesitation, Knowelden suggested "survival".

M. A. Headen

John Knowelden, epidemiologist: born London 15 April 1919; Lecturer in Medical Statistics and Member, Medical Research Council Statistical Research Unit 1949-60; Editor, *British Journal of Preventive and Social Medicine* 1959-69, 1973-76; Professor of Community Medicine (formerly of Preventive Medicine and Public Health), Sheffield University 1960-84; Academic Registrar, Faculty of Community Medicine 1977-83; Civil Consultant in Community Medicine to the Royal Navy 1977-84; CBE 1983; married 1946 Mary Sweet (two sons); died Scarborough 23 July 1997.

turned to the same address by Monday 13 October 1997. Please enter applications received after 12 noon on that day cannot be considered.

Lectures

National Gallery: Paola Tinagli. "Women in Italian Renaissance Art: cassone and spalliera panels". 1pm.

Victoria and Albert Museum: Caroline Sargant. "Techniques of Boule and Lacquer Furniture". 2.30pm.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS
The Duke of York attends the "Widow of Walsingham" concert at the Royal Albert Hall, London SW7. The Princess Royal, President, Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, will attend the Annual Conference of the International Federation of Consulting Engineers, Edinburgh International Conference Centre, Edinburgh, at 10.30am. The Duchess of Gloucester, President, Royal School of Needlework, will attend the "125 Years of Excellence" to mark the 125th anniversary of the Royal School of Needlework, Hampton Court Palace, Surrey, at 10.30am.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment performs the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 1pm.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding announcements, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephone 0171-293 2011 (24-hour answering machine 0171-293 2012) or faxed to 0171-293 2010, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, funerals, forthcoming marriages, Marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. Please include a daytime telephone number.

Birthdays
Prince Henry of Wales, 13: The Rev Professor Peter Ackroyd, Emeritus Professor of Old Testament Studies, London University, 80; Mr Richard Arnell, composer, conductor and film maker, 80; Mr Charles Bone, painter and lecturer, 71; Professor John Russell Brown, professor of theatre, 74; General Eva Burrows, Salvation Army, 68; Mr Jackie Cooper, film actor, 75; Mr Thomas Dugan, diplomat, 50; Lord Eden of Winton, former government minister, 72; Professor Brian Fender, chief executive, Higher Education Funding Council for England, 65; Mr Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, conductor, 64; Dr Richard Gordon, novelist, 76; Sir Philip Harris, chairman, Carpetright of London, 55; Mr David Lepper MP, 52; Miss Jessie Norman, soprano, 52; Viscount Norwich, architectural writer, 68; Mr Abdul Qadir, Pakistani cricketer, 42; Mr Glen Reaher, former chief executive of Reuters, 69; Sir Clive Rose, former diplomat, 76; Sir Konrad Schiemann, a Lord Justice of Appeal,

60; Lady Soames (Mary Soames), author, daughter of Sir Winston Churchill, 75; Sir Peter Sudd, former Lord Mayor of London, 81; Sir Richard Way, former university principal, 85; Professor Alan Whitehead MP, 47; Mr David Wilmore, radio newscaster and presenter, 66.

Anniversaries

Births: Trajan, Roman emperor, 53; Titus Oates, impostor and fabricator of the "Popish Plot", 1698; Hans Arp, painter, engraver, sculptor and poet,

1887; Agatha Mary Clarissa Christie, detective story writer, 1890; Jean Renoir, film director, 1894. Deaths: William Huskisson, statesman, run down by the locomotive *Rocket*, 1830; Isambard Kingdom Brunel, engineer, 1859. On this day: tanks were first used in battle by the British Army at the Somme, 1918; traffic wardens went on duty in London, 1960. Today is the Feast Day of St Achard or Alchardus, St Catherine of Genoa, St Miria, St Neogesa the Goth and St Nicomedes.

Queen's Counsel

The Lord Chancellor invites applications for appointment as Queen's Counsel from advocates who hold, and are entitled to exercise, full rights of audience in the High Court or the Crown Court. Application forms, together with guidance notes for applicants, can be obtained from David Stobie, Lord Chancellor's Department, 2nd Floor, Selborne House, 54-60 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QW, telephone 0171-210 8921. Completed forms should be re-

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business & city

FINANCIAL JOURNAL
OF THE YEAR

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

Virgin acts to stem complaints

Michael Harrison

Virgin Trains is to take on extra staff to improve customer service after being deluged with 7,000 complaints and criticised by the rail regulator since it took over the InterCity West Coast and Cross Country passenger franchises earlier this year.

The company also plans to spend £100m this winter re-vamping its fleet of 100 trains following a large number of complaints about the air conditioning, toilets and buffet facilities on board its InterCity trains.

The volume of complaints has been such that passengers have been unable to get through to Virgin Trains' customer services centre in Birmingham. Telephone lines are jammed on some days and on others calls go unanswered.

From next weekend Virgin's booking service and customer complaints department will be run centrally with customers nationally able to telephone an 0345 number in Edinburgh. An extra 30 staff are being taken on to supplement the 270 sales staff already in Edinburgh and 22 staff in Birmingham dealing with customer complaints.

Virgin took over Cross Country services in January and InterCity West Coast in March. Since then it has run into punctuality problems on the North-west and Scottish sections of the West Coast line which could trigger compensation payments for season ticket holders. A spokesman for the Office

of Passenger Rail Franchising said: "We are disappointed with the performance of Virgin's West Coast service." However, he added that the penalties it could impose on Virgin were limited because it was not subject to the same kind of performance regime as the commuter rail franchises.

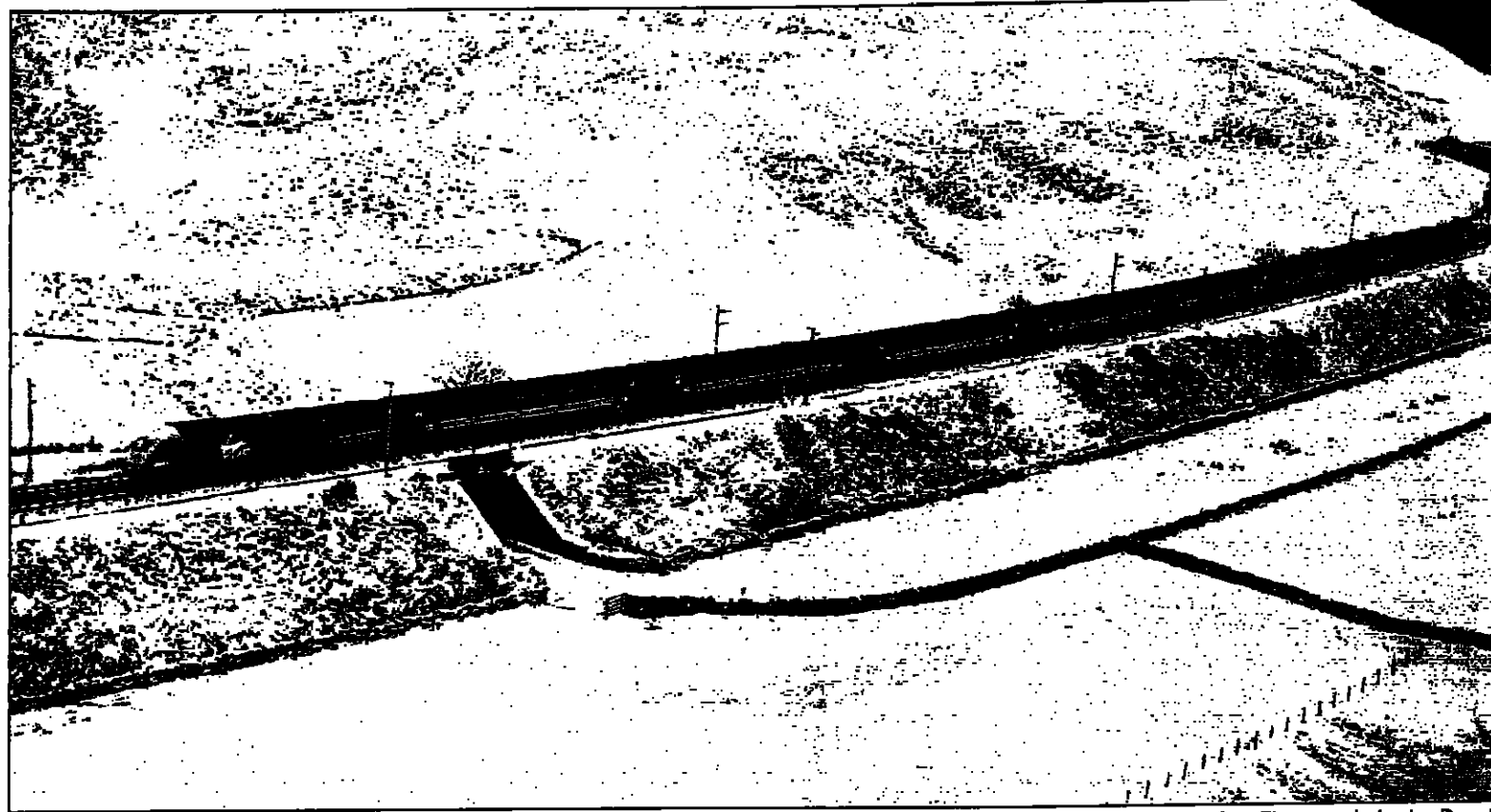
"We judge that the amount of competition Virgin faces from road, rail and, in some cases, air should be enough incentive for them to improve their performance," he said.

The charter standard published by the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising sets Virgin a target of running 90 per cent of services on time or within 10 minutes. If that figure drops to below 87 per cent then passengers are entitled to discounts. Up to the middle of June, punctuality on parts of the West Coast line was only reaching 78 per cent to 81.5 per cent.

The £100m revamp will include new toilets, new seating and baby-changing areas on some trains, refurbishment of buffet areas and new uniforms for staff. Virgin also plans to spend £8m to improve air conditioning on its West Coast trains.

A spokesman conceded that it had received a large number of complaints but said this compared with 12,000 over the same period last year when the two franchises were still under British Rail's control.

"The reason we have had a lot of complaints is that people's expectations are very high."



Virgin Trains' West Coast franchise has been plagued by punctuality problems and complaints about standards of service. Photograph: Lesley Donald

he said. "But they must be patient. We inherited a mess. The West Coast was the worst part of the BR network. There were 250 vacancies in catering, some of the stock had not been repaired for 10 years and uniforms were threadbare. We are

proud of the improvements we have achieved so far." He said that 60 per cent of the complaints it had received over the summer related to air conditioning which was designed so that it only operated at temperatures of more than

29 degrees Celsius. The punctuality problems had been caused mainly by the collapse of a bridge over the West Coast line at Nuneaton which had forced Railtrack to impose a single speed restriction. The West Coast franchise

lasts for 15 years and requires Virgin to invest in a £500m fleet of tilting trains as part of the modernisation of the line. The Government subsidy this year is £77m but from 2001 Virgin starts to pay an annual fee for the franchise rising from

£3.9m to £220.3m. The Cross Country franchise also runs for 15 years and will result in the payment of £376m in subsidies to Virgin. However Virgin has to replace the entire fleet of Cross Country trains by 2002.

Dubious gas sales tactics face curbs

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

The gas watchdog, Ofgas, is to publish plans for legally enforceable curbs on dubious doorstep sales tactics in the next few days after attempts to agree a voluntary code of practice failed.

Officials from Ofgas were understood to be finalising the plans over the weekend, which would include a new condition in gas companies' operating licences obliging them to abide by strict marketing guidelines. The draft code includes a seven-day cooling-off period for customers who sign contracts and a requirement that suppliers do not make outlandish claims.

In trials of domestic gas competition in the south of England, some independent suppliers have been reprimanded by Ofgas for allegedly telling customers that British Gas had either gone out of business or "run out of gas".

The statutory code has emerged after months of haggling, in which Clare Spottiswood, the gas regulator, put her faith in voluntary guidelines. As early as January the Office of Fair Trading convened an industry conference to find a solution. As complaints about dubious sales tactics mounted, Ms Spottiswood faced pressure from the new Government.

Sue Slipman, director of the Gas Consumers Council, hailed the legally enforceable code as a breakthrough. "We've argued for this all along. The regulator had hoped the market could police itself and we're now pleased she has recognised that it won't."

However, the proposals would need the support of 90 per cent of suppliers to come into force, casting doubt on the chances of an agreement.

The industry is already split over a recently created voluntary body, the Association of Energy Suppliers (AES). Two of the biggest independent gas companies, Calor and Eastern, have refused to join the AES, arguing it did not fully reflect the concerns of new entrants into the market.

Neil Lambert, joint general manager of Calor, said he would need to study the Ofgas consultation document closely before agreeing to the new code.

Tottenham looks abroad for new signing

Andrew Yates

Tottenham Hotspur, the North London Premier League football club, is looking for its first acquisitions overseas following its decision last week to appoint Deutsche Morgan Grenfell (DMG), the investment bank, as financial advisers.

Chairman Alan Sugar is believed to be looking at taking a sizeable stake in at least one foreign football club. He is eyeing up targets throughout Europe and the Far East. The appointment of DMG, which will oversee the hunt for acquisitions, is likely to accelerate a deal. An acquisition could be announced by the end of the year, according to industry sources.

A spokesman for Tottenham said: "We are having a look to see what is available overseas and export our expertise of running a football club. We have a desire to expand overseas and there are all sorts of opportunities available."

Tottenham is thought to have looked at leading clubs throughout Europe, including teams in Holland, Spain, Italy and Portugal. A host of leading clubs in these countries are looking to raise extra funds by floating on the stock market or selling stakes in their businesses.

Tottenham has also been

linked with Chinese teams and has been attracted to the country by the vast potential audiences available. The game's popularity is beginning to take off in China, which could lead to huge merchandising opportunities. Tottenham would also be able to expand worldwide sales of its own merchandise by teaming up with a foreign club. Tottenham is one of England's best-known clubs.

A deal could involve the regular transfer of players between the clubs, which would help improve Tottenham's erratic performance on the field. On Saturday they lost 3-0 to Leicester and dropped to ninth in the Premier League table despite recently buying new players such as Les Ferdinand.

Mr Sugar is keen to do a deal and is under pressure to bolster Tottenham's flagging share price, which closed at 94.5p on Friday, well below its 12-month high of 142p.

However Tottenham is facing competition from Caspian, the parent company of Leeds United, in the race to be the first quoted British club to take a stake in an overseas rival. Caspian is reported to be in talks to buy a 20 per cent stake in Sporting Lisbon, a leading Portuguese club which is looking to float on the stock market.

Guinness may hive off spirit brands

Chris Godsmark
and Andrew Yates

Guinness and Grand Metropolitan look set to hive off some of their best-known spirit brands in the latest attempt to clear their proposed £23bn merger with the European Commission.

The two drinks giants are understood to be preparing to offer concessions to the EC's merger task force in a bid to clear the final regulatory hurdles. Karel van Miert, the EC competition commissioner, is thought to have serious concerns about the power the combined group would have over the European spirits market and its ability to dictate terms to drinks retailers.

The merged company, to be

called GMG Brands, would have more than 40 per cent of the Scotch whisky market in several European countries. GrandMet and Guinness are already the world's first and second largest spirits suppliers, with brands such as Bell's whisky, Gordon's gin and Smirnoff vodka. A final decision by the EC is due on 27 October.

Earlier this month the companies put forward a vigorous defence of their plans at two days of private hearings in Brussels after receiving a formal letter of objections from the EC. In this first phase of the negotiations the drinks groups have stopped short of offering any significant alterations to the deal.

But sources close to the discussions said Guinness and GrandMet were preparing to shift their approach in the next few weeks and offer concessions which they hope will satisfy the EC. "From now on it's for GMG to come up with concessions, rather than the merger task force," said the source.

Another industry source said: "GrandMet and Guinness know they may have to make concessions. They are drawing up plans to dispose of some of their brands if that is what it takes to get the merger through."

Some analysts believe that GMG Brands will have to give up at least one of its whisky brands in Europe to receive the green light from the EC competition authorities. Brands

such as Dewar's, White Horse and V&S 69 could be sold, which would still leave the company with leading names such as Johnnie Walker and Bell's.

The EC is also concerned about the dominance the group will have over the European white spirits market and it may be required to sell off leading gin brands such as Bombay.

Drinks rivals Allied Domecq, Irish Distillers and Seagram are believed to have submitted their formal objections to the EC, with fears that the merger will give Guinness and GrandMet a virtual monopoly in certain markets such as Spain, Germany and the Benelux countries.

GMG could also have to give up brands in North America to

clear the deal with the US Federal Trade Commission. Seagram, the Canadian drinks giant, claimed the deal would give GMG Brands a 75 per cent share of the US scotch whisky market. Analysts believe GMG Brands is preparing to dispose of some of its smaller brands such as Scoreby, Crawford and Ushers, which together account for 15 per cent of its US scotch sales.

Even if the EC and FTC are prepared to accept concessions, the company will have to overcome the challenge of Bernard Arnault, head of French luxury goods group LVMH, who is trying to scupper the merger.

A Guinness spokesman said talks with the EC were confidential.

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Daejan to fend off board attack

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Daejan Holdings, the property group controlled by the Freshwater family, is prepared to face down criticism over its failure to comply with corporate governance guidelines at its annual meeting later this week.

Corporate governance specialists have criticised the company's board structure, saying it fails to meet key recommendations laid down by the Hampel committee's findings on corporate governance as well as the Cadbury and Greenbury codes.

There are only two executive directors - Benjamin Freshwater, who holds the positions of both chairman and managing director, and his brother Solomon. There is only one non-executive director, David Davis, who has been on the board since 1971. There is no nominations committee or remuneration committee.

The Hampel committee, which published its preliminary report last month, recommended that though there should be no fixed rules on the age or length of service of non-executive directors, there was a risk of them becoming less

efficient and objective if they remained on the board for an excessive length of time. The reappointment of Mr Davis is due to be voted upon at the annual meeting on Friday.

Daejan's company secretary, Chris Morse, said the board had looked at the corporate governance issue but decided to make no changes "The board has its own views on how to manage its business and the Hampel report seemed to be moving back in that direction."

In the section on corporate governance in the company's annual report, Daejan says it

does not think additional non-executive directors would benefit shareholders or that it was necessary to split the roles of chairman and chief executive. "Changes should be made when they are appropriate and in the best interests of the company, rather than for the sake of change itself."

Daejan shares have risen from £12.65 to £15.30 in the past year. However, over the past five years the shares have underperformed the market by 7 per cent. Daejan owns a mixture of property and is capitalised at £274m.

IN BRIEF

• Pop stars' earnings are set to more than double over the next five years, according to a survey of entertainment agents conducted by Credit Suisse. The UK music industry is expected to show huge growth, driven by strong sales of records overseas. Michael Jackson was voted by agents as the most successful pop star ever, according to the survey. He beat Oasis into second place, but the Manchester pop sensation came ahead of U2 and the Spice Girls. However, aspiring stars cannot count on cashing in on the industry's growth. Agents said the majority of new bands failed within 12 months and image was much more important than talent.

• Economic growth in the UK is set to almost halve over the next year as rising interest rates hit consumer spending, the Chartered Institute of Marketing forecasts today. Professor Douglas McWilliams, the institute's economic adviser, predicted that total output growth would fall from 3.7 per cent this year to 2.1 per cent next year and would edge up only slightly to 2.3 per cent in 1999. Inflation will also drop back to 2.7 per cent in 1998.

• Worldwide demand for energy could double by 2030, needing investment of \$3 trillion to cope with demand, according to a report by PowerGen, the privatised generator. It says the huge rise in demand will influence the structure of the industry, with emerging economies funding the investment through privatisation programmes. PowerGen says the industry is likely to rationalise into large global companies or smaller independent power producers.

• Marks & Spencer is planning to bring its Brooks Brothers clothing chain into Britain and Europe. There are 112 Brooks Brothers outlets in America and 62 in Japan. The chain, bought by M&S in 1988 for £400m, mainly sells classic menswear, although recently it has introduced casualwear ranges.

GE Capital buys insurance firm that targets smokers

Nic Cicutti

Personal Finance Editor

GE Capital, the US financial services giant, is paying £56m to take over Stalwart Group, the insurance company specialising in home income plans and annuities for smokers and other health-impaired individuals.

The purchase - from Euro-

pean Acquisition Capital (EAC), Foreign & Colonial Ventures and other smaller shareholders - means Stalwart's value has risen more than threefold since 1994.

Bert Wignman, chief executive at EAC, said yesterday: "We are delighted with this investment's performance. Not only is it a satisfying financial return

for EAC, it is also an important strategic move for Stalwart which can now enjoy ready access to the capital and blue-chip percentage necessary to take it into its next stage of continued strong growth."

Since its acquisition by EAC in January 1994, the firm has increased its staff from 18 to 100. The turnaround at Stalwart,

based in Dorking, Surrey, follows three years in which the company has attracted massive business inflows through its promotion of pension annuity products aimed at people such as smokers. Until recently, they were able to obtain only the same pension as their healthier counterparts, despite having a greater likelihood of dying earlier.

The company also specialises in sales of "safe" home income plans, where homeowners can obtain an income in old age in return for signing over a proportion of their home's value when they die.

Stalwart's plans, with which it has cornered 70 per cent of the market, differ from those sold in the late 1980s. Then, many

lenders advanced mortgages which were invested with the aim of paying off the loan and giving borrowers an income.

The housing market's collapse, together with rising interest rates and the 1990 stock market fall, meant tens of thousands of people found themselves with huge loans they could not pay off.

STOCK MARKETS

FTSE 100

Month	Index Value
April	4800
May	4750
June	4900
July	5000
August	5100
September	5050

FT 100 Index Data

Indices

Index	Close	Tk's chg	Change	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	Yield%
FTSE 100	4848.20	-0.60	-0.14	5088.90	4056.60	3.40
FTSE 250	4380.80	-0.40	-0.09	4729.40	4386.20	3.58
FTSE 350	2342.50	-0.80	-0.12	2438.00	2017.90	3.44
FTSE SmallCap	2271.28	-2.10	-0.09	2374.20	2178.29	3.18
FTSE All-Share	2292.01	-2.71	-0.12	2376.39	1989.78	3.42
New York	7742.97	-79.44	-1.02	8259.31	5032.94	1.67
Taipei	17963.80	-316.43	-1.73	20581.07	17359.65	0.84
Hong Kong	14470.46	+152.16	+1.13	16673.27	12058.17	2.99
Frankfurt	3854.81	-117.74	-2.98	4436.53	2948.77	1.37

Source: FT Information

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
UK interest rates									
Instrument	Rate	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year
Bank of England	7.00	7.00	6.50	6.00	5.50	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50
UK Govt	7.00	7.00	6.50	6.00	5.50	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50
US interest rates									
Instrument	Rate	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year
Federal Reserve	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25
US Govt	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25

CURRENCIES									
£/\$									
Index	Close	Tk's chg	1 Week	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Year	5 Year
£/\$	1.6286	+0.016	+0.016	+0.016	+0.016	+0.016	+0.016	+0.016	+0.016
\$/£	0.6147	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001
£/DM									
Index	Close	Tk's chg	1 Week	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Year	5 Year
£/DM	1.9375	+1.35e	+1.35e	+1.35e	+1.35e	+1.35e	+1.35e	+1.35e	+1.35e
DM/£	0.5162	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001	-0.001

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مكتبة القرآن



GAVYN DAVIES

It is not easy for the Government to make a watertight pre-commitment in the near future to join in two or three years' time. But a lesser option would be possible, in which it commits itself to the principle of future membership and adopts a 'convergence' programme

Britain faces D-day on EMU and referendum

The most important decision of the Blair premiership may well be taken in the next few months, when Britain is forced to come off the fence on the question of membership of the European single currency. There are still some hopeful souls who believe that a general postponement of the entire EMU project might be engineered, if not of the ultimate launch of euro notes and coins in 2002, then at least of the initial date of monetary union in 1999.

Remember that in the first three years of EMU, from 1999 to 2002, the European Central Bank will be fully operational, but domestic currency denominations will continue to circulate in each national economy. It has been suggested (by Walter Eltis among others) that this interim phase could prove extremely unstable, since it will allegedly have all the fragility of a fixed exchange rate system, with none of the offsetting shock absorbers. Given these supposed disadvantages of the interim stage, the proposition is to shrink its length from three years to (say) one year, by delaying the launch of EMU until 2001. A further interesting wrinkle on this proposition is that the UK could provide the excuse for Germany and France to accept delay by offering to join EMU in 2001, thus allowing the entire EU to adopt the single currency simultaneously.

One problem with these ideas is that there is no longer much indication that the core members of EMU are looking for an excuse to delay. Certainly, the new French government is acting as if it has decided that EMU in 1999 is the least worst option it can choose. In Germany, where there was a major wobble in the spring and summer, nerves have now been steadied, and the French Socialists have been reluctantly accepted as

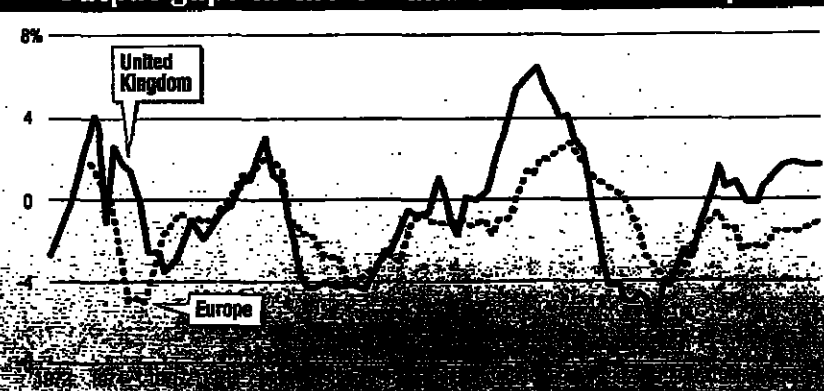
suitable partners for the marriage. In all probability, if the Blair government suggested a two-year delay in order to allow the UK to join the first round, it would be met with an embarrassing rebuff.

Another problem with this approach is that the Eltis analysis of the flaws in the interim stage of the monetary union is far too pessimistic. Eltis makes two crucial claims, both of which are wrong. The first is that interest rates will not be able to diverge during the interim stage, so that the private sector will face no disincentive against holding all of its assets in "strong" currency denominations like the mark, while switching completely out of "weak" denominations like the lira. The second is that, if faced with this problem, the Bundesbank might not be willing to increase the supply of marks to match the extra demand as the stamped-out of lira occurs. The result would be that the mark would have to be revalued – or, in other words, the single currency would explode before it was truly launched.

Neither of these claims is valid. The first is simply based on a misperception of how the interim stage will work – it will be perfectly possible for the interest rate on mark deposits to be lower than that on lira deposits during that stage, if that is required to equilibrate the market. Provided that the whole EMU enterprise has political credibility, then a relatively small interest differential should be enough to prevent the stampede into marks which Eltis fears. After all, why should the private sector choose to lose money by holding marks instead of lira, unless they become certain during the interim stage that the entire Maastricht process is imminently facing collapse?

The second claim is also invalid, provided that the Treaty stands. Under Maastricht, the

Output gaps in the UK and continental Europe



Bundesbank will no longer be an independent central bank in the interim stage, but will instead be in the infinitely inferior position of an operating arm of the ECB. Therefore, should the Eltis stampede occur, the Bundesbank will be forced under its treaty obligations to issue exactly as many marks as are required to satisfy the demand for marks. Only by repudiating the Treaty could Germany do anything different. Since no one will expect this, the problems which Eltis foresees should not develop in the first place.

The lack of enthusiasm for any thoughts of delay was reinforced at the meeting of European finance ministers at the weekend, when "senior sources" from the UK were apparently acknowledging that it would be difficult for Britain to stay out of the single currency indefinitely. But entry in the first round still seems fraught with difficulties. As the graph shows, the cyclical divergence be-

tween the UK and continental Europe is still very wide, which makes it very hard even for the most enthusiastic proponents of EMU to support UK entry in 15 months' time.

Imagine what would happen to the overheating British economy if short-term interest rates were to decline to the EMU average of, say, 4 per cent by the end of next year. This, combined with the effects of depreciating sterling to its likely EMU entry rate of DM2.50-2.60 would surely unleash a 1968-style boom in this country.

Furthermore, there is really no knowing when the cyclical divergence between the UK and the Continent will be ironed out sufficiently to permit UK membership of the single currency. If all goes well both here and in the rest of Europe, it is possible that our economy will gradually slow down while others speed up in the next couple of years, with the two regions consequently meeting happily in

mid-cycle activity rates (ie approximately zero output gaps) in a couple of years' time.

In this event, UK membership of EMU could become feasible later in this Parliament. But it is equally possible that the UK cycle will not come into line with the European cycle for many years, in which case premature entry into the single currency would simply invite a repeat of the ERM debacle.

Given this genuine uncertainty, it is not easy for the Government to make a watertight pre-commitment in the near future to join in EMU in two or three years' time. But a lesser option would be possible, in which the Government commits itself firmly to the principle of future membership, adopts a "convergence" programme of measures which prepares the economy for membership, and actively participates in decisions relating to the future of EMU.

This would minimise the loss of political influence in the EU which will undoubtedly happen if the UK remains outside the first round. But there would still be the little matter of the timing of the referendum to consider. Until now, it has seemed safe to assume that Tony Blair would want to leave open all of his options on referendum timing, so that he could opportunistically choose the right moment when it arises. But, given the extraordinary popularity of the Government, and the result in Scotland last Thursday, it may occur to the Prime Minister that an early referendum might be winnable, especially if British business comes off the fence fairly soon.

Nothing would give the inclusive Mr Blair greater pleasure than to align himself with British business, and then see his new combination defeat Mr Hague's isolationist Tory Party on the critical question of integration in Europe.

Let's get this invention on the road

Around the world the giant car makers are pouring billions of pounds into designing the latest models. But it has taken a small, British hot-house developer to come up with potentially one of the most significant innovations in the motor industry.

The Torotrak transmission system, the brainchild of the patent licensing group BTG, changes gear automatically without the use of a clutch, solving one of the motor industry's last unconquered technological problems. BTG claims it costs one-fifth less to produce than a normal automatic transmission, uses at least 15 per cent less fuel and, according to those allowed a test ride in prototype cars, gives an unbelievably smooth ride. So much so that the company is introducing an artificial lurch to remind drivers when they are racing up a hill.

Transmissions, the parts on the underside of a car that we never see, are, crudely, what makes the engine drive the wheels. The area has been a

A small British company could hit the big time with a motoring innovation. Sameena Ahmad reports

graveyard for technological advance despite years of research effort. Engineers have long understood that fixed speed gearboxes are inefficient. To optimise fuel consumption drivers must be skilled enough to match engine speed with the car's speed, using the gears.

In theory, the solution should be continuous variable transmissions (CVT), with an infinity of gear ratios. But despite decades of research there have been few successes. The best-known CVT, and still something of a joke in the motor world, was the infamous Daf, Holland's only independent car maker until its takeover by Volvo in the mid-Seventies.

Launched in the 1950s, the Dafodil (later abbreviated to Daf), used rubber bands in its transmission, which became legendary for high-pitched whirring noises and delayed

acceleration. In the 1980s car giants such as Ford and Fiat developed the idea using steel belts which expanded or shrank as the speed changed.

According to BTG, Torotrak's so-called infinitely variable transmission (IVT) looks quite different, using discs and rollers to disperse with the clutch. For the first time the engine is directly connected to the wheels, dramatically improving efficiency. A car with Torotrak can be driving at 60 mph, but at such low revolutions that the engine is effectively idling. Though no car company has yet committed to produce a car fitted with Torotrak, Ford, Toyota and Getrag, which supplies BMW with transmissions, have all signed licences with full production in mind. General Motors should be next to sign.

Ian Harvey, BTG's chief executive, predicts that Torotrak

could become the industry standard by 2010: "Fuel efficiency and low production costs are crucial to car manufacturers. And Torotrak gives the same handling as current cars. No other system has all that."

The potential of Torotrak has not been lost on investors. Since BTG was floated at £40m two years ago, its value has risen almost 20-fold. Some overexcited observers even estimate that Torotrak alone justifies BTG's current £705m market valuation. Shareholders should not underestimate the difficulty of persuading the conservative car market to adopt such a radical new product. Maurice Martin, Torotrak's chief executive, admits that car manufacturers are formidably tough customers.

He tells of painstaking instructions from one licensee to position the transmission at a precise distance from the engine

casing. "We spent so much time and effort getting it just right. In the end, the distance was too big. They told us to readjust it by hitting it with a hammer. We had to grit our teeth," he laughs. "But no car maker wants even the remotest risk that they will have to recall their vehicles."

Funding is another concern. BTG, yet to make sustained profits, is having to invest huge sums in research and in kitting out the factory at Leyland in Lancashire. Torotrak has cost more than £10m to develop so far and will not be in production in a car before 2001. Half of BTG's recent £25m placing proceeds are allocated to Torotrak to fund two years' research, yet, as Mr Martin admits, Torotrak's appetite for cash is growing.

That Torotrak dominates BTG's valuation also raises a serious issue. BTG is fundamentally a patent licensing group, brimming with more than 9,000 patented inventions. For investors wary of one-product biotechnology companies,



Gear change: The Dutch Daf was an earlier attempt at a continuously variable transmission

BTG has been marketed as a safe and unique way to invest in UK technology. But the innovation has changed that. As Mr Harvey says: "Torotrak

is some 40 per cent of our valuation, which exposes us to the risk of failure. Torotrak is also a development company, taking BTG out of just licensing." The

solution, and an option under review, says Mr Harvey, is to demerge Torotrak. Whatever happens, Torotrak's progress is one roadshow to keep watching.

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news

Politically correct tourism displaces the world's most endangered people



On safari: Masai children (above) drinking from a tourist's water bottle in the Monduli area of Tanzania. Left: European travellers pulling their truck through a muddy stretch of track during an overland trek in Cameroon.

Photographs: Robert Harding Picture Library



World conservation groups accused of putting people last in rush to preserve endangered plant and animal species

Ian Burrell

Well-meaning conservation groups have been accused of putting trees and animals before people and driving ancient tribal groups from their land to make way for nature reserves. Peoples that have lived self-sufficiently for centuries have been forced to give up hunting and farm only in designated areas in order to make way for eco-tourists and schemes aimed at preserving endangered species.

Survival International said last night that conservation groups were now becoming a significant threat to the existence of tribal peoples as large corporations and oppressive governments.

The Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) refuted the criticisms saying that it no longer practised "eco-colonialism" and that local people were being involved in all new parks projects.

Survival claimed that in the Philippines, the survival of the Tagbanwa and Batak peoples, who now number less than 1,000, is being jeopardised by plans to expand St Paul's Park, a nature reserve which was originally set up by the WWF. Some Batak people have already been expelled from the site and the expansion would lead to a ban on them farming their lands, it said.

Another project set up by the WWF, the Korup national park in Cameroon, has led to the displacement of the Korup people, after bans on hunting were imposed. The park is designed to protect the red-crowned monkey and other species.

Survival also criticised Conservation International, an American organisation, for setting up a project in Surinam to scour the jungle to find them medicinal plants for use in the pharmaceutical industry.

It said the local people, the Saramaka Maroons, could not read or write and had no knowledge of international property rights. The pattern for excluding native people from conservation parks was set by German zoologist Professor Bernhard Grzimek, an outspoken champion of the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania, who declared: "A national park must remain a primordial wilderness to be effective. No men, not even native ones, should live inside its borders."

Other conservation groups

have shown a willingness to work with governments which have appalling human rights records for the treatment of their indigenous peoples.

In Burma, the junta has been seeking to improve its environmental reputation by working closely with the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the Smithsonian Institution, two of the world's top names in wildlife protection.

To make way for what is planned as the biggest nature reserve of its kind in the world, the Burmese army is currently driving the native Karen people from their jungle homelands and razing the area.

In Sri Lanka, the preservation of elephants and leopards has been identified as the priority of the Madura Oya National Park where the presence of the Vedda, the indigenous people of the island, is now illegal. The park was set up in consultation with the United Nations Environment Programme.

Ticia Barnett, director of pressure group Tourism Concern, said: "Local people have for many years been evicted from their homes because they have not been considered responsible enough to maintain their own environment. 'Where conservationists go, tourists follow but the local people cannot'."

Richard Garside, spokesman for Survival, said: "People are being forced into economic and social hardship as a result of a bizarre idea of environmentalism."

"We all want a globe which is less polluted but conservation groups have got to realise that the people themselves have a stake in the environment in which they live."

Last year, the WWF, which concedes it may have had more of a paternalistic approach to tribal people in the past, published a position paper to stress its commitment to a fair relationship.

It said: "The Worldwide Fund for Nature recognises that indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources that they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used and that those rights must be recognised and effectively protected."

Cherry Farrow of WWF said that the group's work was

no longer just about conservation but also attempted to alleviate poverty among the local population.

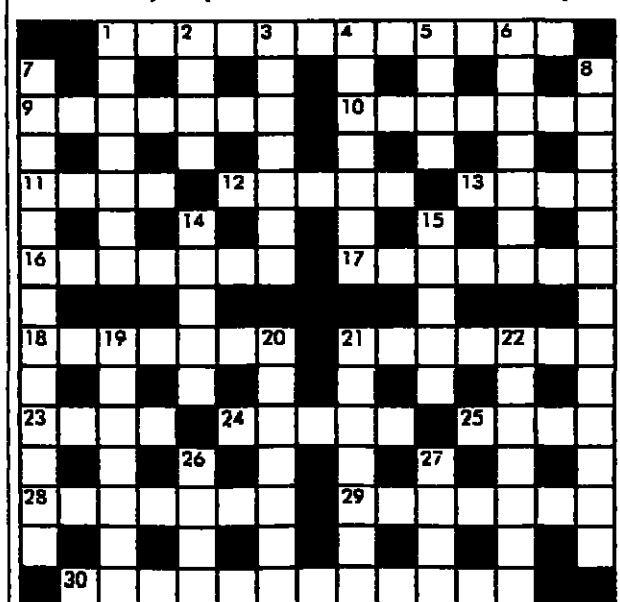
She said: "All of our work with national parks integrates with local people so that effectively they become guardians of their own resources."

"You don't manage anything if you alienate people."

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3404, Monday 15 September

By Porcia



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Published by Newspaper Publishing PLC, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL.
and printed at Mirror Colour Press, 54 Albion Road, Waltham and Holford, Waltham. Back issues available from Historic Newspapers 0800 906 609.
Monday 15 September 1997. Registered as a newspaper with the Post Office.

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